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SCHOOL COUNSELING PROFESSIONALS' EXPERIENCES USING ASCA'S MINDSETS
& BEHAVIORS FOR STUDENT SUCCESS TO ACHIEVE COLLEGE AND CAREER

READINESS

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Old Dominion University in Partial Fulfillment of the
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ABSTRACT

SCHOOL COUNSELING PROFESSIONALS' EXPERIENCES USING ASCA'S MINDSETS & BEHAVIORS FOR STUDENT SUCCESS TO ACHIEVE COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS

George Wilson
Old Dominion University, 2020
Chair: Dr. Kristy Carlisle

College and career readiness has become a national priority for post-secondary student success, and school counselors play an essential role in implementing programs that develop college and career knowledge and skills. However, recent studies suggest that many high school graduates report feeling unprepared for continued success and many school counselors report feeling underprepared to address college and career readiness concerns with K-12 students. This qualitative study explored school counselor educators' and high school counselors' experiences addressing the topic of college and career readiness during their CACREP accredited school counseling graduate program with a specific focus on the American School Counselor Association's Mindsets & Behaviors for Student Success: K-12 College- and Career Readiness for Every Student resource. Twelve school counselor educators participated in a semi-structured interview and shared their experiences addressing college and career readiness strategies and resources within their CACREP accredited school counseling program. Additionally, four high school counselors who have recently graduated from a CACREP accredited master's program and a high school college and career counselor participated in a focus group and discussed their experiences related to the topic.

A diverse research team engaged in a thematic analysis supported by Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step approach to develop the following five themes: *conceptualizing college and*

career readiness, challenges addressing CCR in school counseling graduate programs, multicultural influences, ASCA's MBSS in practice, and challenges with ASCA and the MBSS. In addition, the research team also identified 24 subthemes to support the themes. The findings suggest that many school counselor educators also report feeling underprepared to address the topic of college and career readiness with school counseling graduate students indicating that additional college and career readiness training is needed for all school counseling professionals. Implications for school counseling professionals and organizations, limitations of the study, and potential areas of future research were also addressed.

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This dissertation is dedicated to the greatest dad who ever lived.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the researcher will introduce the proposed study by providing background information of the research topic as well as identify the purpose of the study. The researcher will then provide a summary of the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) as well as examine the development of their *Mindsets & Behaviors for Student Success: K-12 College and Career-Readiness Standards for Every Student* (MBSS) resource which is a primary component of the recently updated ASCA National Model (ASCA, 2019). The potential impact that this dissertation can have on school counselor educators as well as school counselors will then be introduced. Finally, the researcher will briefly introduce the research design, overview of the proposed methodology, role of the researcher, and operational definitions that are used in this manuscript.

Background

In 2014, The American School Counselor Association (ASCA), released the MBSS which describe “the knowledge, skills and attitudes students need to achieve academic success, college and career readiness, and social/emotional development” (ASCA, 2014, p.1) to support school counselors in their efforts in addressing college and career readiness concerns with students. Although research suggests that school counselors understand the importance of using data to provide college and career readiness services (Abel, Oliver, Keller, McAulay & Piatek, 2015), there remains a lack of literature relating to how college and career readiness and the ASCA National Model are addressed in CACREP accredited school counseling master’s programs. The researcher of this study examined how school counselor educators and high school counselors have experienced addressing college and career readiness strategies and

ASCA's MBSS in CACREP accredited school counseling master's programs. Twelve school counselor educators were interviewed and asked to share their experiences as it relates to introducing graduate students to college and career readiness and the ASCA National Model. Additionally, five high school counselors participated in a focus group and were asked to share personal experiences relating to how college and career readiness strategies were addressed in their CACREP school counseling programs. By engaging school counselor educators and high school counselors in a conversation about college and career readiness and the ASCA National model, patterns, and themes have emerged that can provide organizations such as ASCA, American Counselor Association (ACA), and Council for Accreditation of Counseling & Related Educational Programs (CACREP) suggestions on how they can further support future school counselors in better understanding how they are able to help students address college and career readiness concerns.

ASCA

Established in 1952, *The American School Counselor Association* (ASCA) aims at supporting school counselors as they help students focus on academic, career, and social/emotional goals that will promote their success after graduation. According to the vision of ASCA, the four pillars that make up the foundation of a successful comprehensive school counseling program include: leadership, advocacy, collaboration, and systemic change. Additionally, ASCA sets out to provide school counselors with knowledge, skills, and resources that promote student success while encouraging professionalism and ethical practices. A specific example of how ASCA has attempted to assist school counselors in helping students meet their career, academic, and social/emotional goals is through the implementation of ASCA's Mindsets & Behaviors for Student Success.

ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors for Student Success

In August of 2014, ASCA's Mindsets & Behaviors for Student Success: K-12 College- and Career Readiness for Every Student document was released to serve as the next generation of standards replacing the ASCA National Standards for Students (Campbell & Dahir, 1997). The 35 standards which make up ASCA's MBSS can be split into two categories: *Mindsets Standards* (6) and *Behavior Standards* (29). The first category, *Mindset Standards*, consists of six mindsets that school counselors should encourage their students to possess such as: *M 4. - Understanding that postsecondary education and life-long learning are necessary for long-term career success*, *M 2. – Self-confidence in ability to succeed*, and *M 5. – Belief in using abilities to their fullest to achieve high-quality results and outcomes*. The second category, *Behavior Standards*, consists of 29 behaviors that students should be able to demonstrate after school counselor interventions such as classroom lessons, activities, and individual and small group counseling. Examples of behavior standards include: *B-LS 7. – Identify long- and short-term academic, career and social/ emotional goals*, *B-SMS 5. – Demonstrate perseverance to achieve long- and short-term goals*, and *B-SS 7. Use leadership and teamwork skills to work effectively in diverse teams*. Through effectively incorporating ASCA's MBSS into a school counseling program, school counselors are able to identify specific mindsets and behaviors that can be used to help students address college/career, academic, and social/emotional concerns.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this dissertation was to explore school counselor educators' experiences of addressing college and career readiness in school counseling programs with a specific focus on ASCA's MBSS resource. Currently, researchers have thoroughly addressed the role of the school counselor in assisting K-12 students in becoming college and career ready (Bridgeland &

Bruce, 2011; Brown, 2018; Savitz-Romer, 2012). Researchers have also examined the level of preparedness reported by novice school counselors in being able to address college and career readiness concerns with students (e.g., Hines, Lemons, & Crews 2011; Morgan, Greenwaldt, & Gosselin, 2014; Savitz-Romer, 2012). Overwhelmingly, research indicates many school counselors report that their school counseling graduate program did not adequately prepare them to be able to address college and career readiness concerns with their students (Bridgeland & Bruce, 2011; Brown, 2018; Savitz-Romer, 2012). This study also addressed the gap in the literature that fails to provide school counselor educators with a voice to address how they experience infusing college and career readiness strategies and resources with school counseling graduate students. By gaining a better understanding of school counselor educators' experiences introducing future school counselors to college and career readiness strategies and the ASCA National Model, the researcher has provided specific recommendations of how school counseling programs can better prepare future school counselors.

Significance for School Counseling Professionals

Because of the nation-wide push for all students attending schools in the United States to be college and career ready, school counseling professionals are tasked with the responsibility of ensuring all students have a plan for post-secondary success. School counselor educators are expected to provide their school counseling students with evidence-based resources that will help them address college and career readiness. Similarly, the results of this study can help school counselors identify resources and best practices that can support their ability to implement an effective college and career readiness program.

Significance for School Counseling Educators

Despite the abundance of research which suggests school counseling graduate programs are not adequately preparing future school counselors to address college and career readiness concerns with future students (Hines, Lemons, & Crews, 2011; Morgan, Greenwalt, & Gosselin, 2014; and Savitz-Romer, 2012) there remains a lack of literature that examines school counselor educators' experiences of addressing college and career readiness resources such as ASCA's MBSS. In this study, twelve school counselor educators were provided with an opportunity to describe their experiences of addressing college and career readiness in their school counseling graduate program. The results of this study can potentially help other school counselor educators learn effective strategies that they can incorporate into their school counseling graduate program such as the ASCA National Model and their MBSS resource.

Significance for School Counselors

Similarly, school counselors who review this manuscript will be able to see how well they relate to the data collected from the interviews as well as the focus group which included five school counselors. The themes that were generated related to how current school counselors have learned ASCA's MBSS as well as an analysis of other strategies and resources can significantly assist school counselors who wish to increase their ability to address college and career readiness concerns with their students. Finally, the primary researcher has also provided school counseling organizations such as ASCA and CACREP with specific experiences and examples of why school counseling professionals have consistently reported a difficulty in effectively infusing college and career readiness strategies such as the ASCA National Model into school counseling programs.

Research Questions

This study will be guided by the following two research questions:

1. What are school counseling professionals' experiences addressing college and career readiness?
2. What are school counseling professionals' experiences of addressing ASCA's MBSS in CACREP accredited school counseling programs?

Research Tradition

This qualitative study utilized thematic analysis to examine how school counseling professionals experience incorporating college and career readiness strategies and resources such as ASCA's MBSS to address college and career readiness in school counseling programs. A qualitative research methodology is utilized to provide a voice to individuals and groups that have not been heard before (Creswell, 2016). Specific to this study, although researchers have thoroughly examined how prepared school counselors feel to address college and career readiness concerns as well as how prepared high school graduates indicate feeling (Bettinger & Long, 2009; Johnson & Rochkind, 2010), this study is unique because it provides school counselor educators with an opportunity to share their experiences related to how the topic is addressed in their CACREP accredited school counseling graduate programs. After the qualitative data was collected, a research team engaged in a thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) by analyzing transcripts and developing patterns and themes related to the research questions.

Overview of Methodology

A research team consisting of the primary researcher and two research team members engaged in thematic analysis to make sense of the collected data and generate themes. The research team used Braun & Clarke's (2006) six-phase guide for a thematic analysis to explore school counselor educators' and school counselors' experiences addressing college and career

readiness and the ASCA National Model in CACREP accredited school counseling programs. This six-phase framework includes: *become familiar with the data, generate initial codes, search for themes, review themes, define themes, and a final write-up*. Consistent with Braun & Clarke's (2006) recommendation, the research team constantly moved back and forth among the stages to effectively identify patterns and themes within the data. Because the purpose of this study to identify patterns and themes derived from the interviews and focus group, Braun & Clarke's (2006) recommendations of an inductive approach to a thematic analysis provided the research team with a clear framework for analyzing the data.

Role of the Researcher

The primary researcher was responsible for conducting a thorough review of the literature related to the topic, developing a strong research team of professionals interested in the topic, instructing the research team on how to engage in a thematic analysis, interviewing all participants, sending the interviews to a transcription service, coding transcripts, protecting the confidentiality of participants, and reporting data consistent with the professional and ethical standards outlined by CACREP (2016).

Abbreviations

For the purposes of this dissertation, the following abbreviations will be used throughout the manuscript:

ASCA – American School Counselor Association – Organization which supports school counselors' efforts in helping students focus on academic, career, and social/emotional development through advocacy, leadership, collaboration and systemic change.

CACREP – Council for Accreditation of Counseling & Related Educational Programs –National accredited counseling master's and doctoral programs.

CCR – College and Career Readiness – The degree to which a student is prepared to succeed in an entry-level career pathway without the need for remedial assistance.

K-12 – Kindergarten – 12th grade students.

SC – K-12 School Counselor.

SCE – School Counselor Educator – An instructor or professor who facilitates school counseling graduate courses at a college or university.

SCP – School Counseling Professionals – School counselor educators, school counselors, college and career readiness counselors.

MBSS – ASCA’s Mindsets & Behaviors for Student Success: K-12 College and Career-Readiness Standards for Every Student.

Summary

Although many organizations such as ASCA, CACREP, and the National Association for College and Admissions Counseling have advocated for a nation-wide push to ensure all K-12 students are college and career ready, recent studies suggest school counselors report feeling underprepared to address student college and career concerns (Bridgeland & Bruce, 2011; Brown 2018). Similarly, recent high school graduates have also reported that they do not feel their school counselors have adequately helped to prepare them for life after high school (Bettinger & Long, 2009; Johnson & Rochkind, 2010). Despite the overwhelming amount of evidence (e.g., ASCA 2019, Hines, Lemons, & Crews, 2011; Savitz-Romer, 2012) that identifies the role of the school counselors as essential in helping students become college and career ready as well as the multiple studies that highlight school counselors’ experiences of feeling underprepared in addressing college and career readiness concerns with their students, there is a clear lack of research which provides school counselor educators with a voice in how they are experiencing

addressing college and career readiness and the ASCA National Model in their school counseling program. After analyzing the interviews with seventeen school counseling professionals, the research team has provided the school counseling field with specific implications of how school counseling programs can better prepare future school counselors to ensure all K-12 students are college and career ready.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

This chapter will provide a review of the literature as it relates to school counseling professionals' experiences addressing college and career readiness in school counseling programs with a specific focus on ASCA's Mindsets and Behaviors for Student Success standards. The researcher will begin by identifying research related to the school counselor's role in ensuring all students are college and career ready. The researcher will then provide a brief history of The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) including its creation, mission, vision, background, and importance to the profession of school counseling. Next, a thorough literature review related to ASCA's *Mindsets & Behaviors for Student Success: K-12 College and Career Readiness Standards for Every Student* (ASCA, 2014) will be examined. The researcher will then present research related to how school counselor educators have reported to experience college and career readiness in their profession. The researcher will then transition into how school counselor educators have been reported to have been introducing their students to college and career readiness resources. Finally, literature related to the school counselor's role in addressing college and career readiness will be explored. By completing an extensive literature review related to College and Career Readiness, ASCA, ASCA's MBSS, college and career readiness preparation in school counseling graduate programs, the researcher hopes to be able to provide insights on how school counseling programs can better prepare future school counselors to address the topic of college and career readiness.

College and Career Readiness

Because school counselors are at the forefront of ensuring K-12 students are prepared for post-secondary success (Abel & Oliver, 2018), it is imperative that school counselors develop a

comprehensive college and career readiness program. Researchers (i.e. Hines, Lemons, & Crews, 2011; Morgan, Greenwalt, & Gosselin, 2014; and Savitz-Romer, 2012) have acknowledged the school counselor's pivotal role in addressing college and career readiness with students. Considered a "national priority in the United States" (Savitz-Romer, 2012, p.1), college readiness refers to a specific set of knowledge and skills believed to be necessary for post-secondary success (Abel and Oliver, 2018). College and career readiness can also be described as a developmental process that engages students in developing postsecondary aspirations and expectations, gaining awareness of one's interests and abilities, and receiving support and information from school counselors that will enhance their ability to enter college and obtain a college degree (Savitz-Romer, 2012). The history of recognizing the importance of college and career readiness can be traced back as far as a 1779 quote from Thomas Jefferson who stated: "The mass of our citizens may be divided into two classes – the laboring and the learned. The laboring will need the first grade of education to qualify them for their pursuits and duties; the learned will need it as a foundation for further acquirements." –Thomas Jefferson to Peter Carr, 1814. ME 19:213 (Sparagana, 2002).

Recent research suggests school counselors are in a position to improve admission rates to traditional four-year college and university programs by providing college readiness counseling (Bryan, Moore-Thomas, Day-Vines, & Holcomb-McCoy, 2011; Enberg & Gilbert, 2014; Hurwitz & Howell, 2014; and Woods & Domina, 2014). Hurwitz and Howell (2014) found that the addition of just one high school counselor could result in a 10% increase of college enrollment for that school. In a 2011 survey, 65% of high school students acknowledge high school counselors as one of the top three resources for preparing for college (Metlife, 2011). The role of the school counselor is equally as important when working with students who have

goals other than obtaining a traditional college degree. Because ASCA (2017) calls attention to the reality that current workforce projections typically require at least some level of postgraduation education, it is critical that school counselors are prepared to work with students who plan to transition directly into the workforce. In addition to recommending that school counselors collaborate with students, educational staff, families, and the community, ASCA (2017) lists 14 specific ways school counselors can assist students' in career development including: introducing careers and the world of work beginning in lower elementary grades (pre-K–3), helping students plan the transition into the world of work, and providing learning and experiential opportunities for students to acquire behaviors and skills for career readiness (ASCA, 2017).

The role of the school counselor in ensuring all students are college and career ready is particularly important when working with students of color. Researchers have suggested that minority students and students who live in urban environments are reported to heavily rely on assistance from their school counselor as they prepare for a successful life after high school (Choy, Horn, Nuñez & Chen, 2000; Farmer-Hinton, 2008). According to Savitz-Romer (2014), this is in part due to the fact that these students often “lack college knowledge, possess low postsecondary aspirations due to perceived academic or financial barriers, and may not have access to social networks to assist with their planning” (p. 2). Researchers have also identified the role of the school counselor as fundamental when working with first-generation college students who are typically unable to rely on parents for assistance in the college application and selection process (Cholewa, Burkhardt, & Hull, 2015; Choy, Horn, Nuñez & Chen, 2000; McKillip, Rawls, & Barry, 2012).

Because the role of the school counselor is constantly being examined as student needs evolve, it is important for school counselors to be up to date on current trends and resources specific to college and career readiness such as ASCA's MBSS. ASCA makes note that school counselors should understand that student growth in the career, academic, and social/emotional domains are equally as important as they help all students prepare to be productive citizens after completing high school. By developing and implementing a comprehensive school counseling program that is able to address student needs relating to the college admissions process as well as how they are able to transition straight into the military (Alger & Luke, 2015) or workforce, researchers seem to agree that students will be much better prepared to become productive citizens after completing high school.

Although research clearly indicates that effective college and career readiness counseling can result in student success after high school (Hines, Lemons, & Crews, 2011), it has been reported that approximately one-third of graduating high school students considered themselves unprepared for college, resulting in the need of remedial assistance or developmental work before embarking on college level courses (Bettinger & Long, 2009). Other researchers (Lara, Kline & Peterson, 2011) examined the experiences and perceptions of master's level counseling students regarding career counseling and the results revealed students did not feel competent to conduct career counseling and emphasized the need for additional training. Furthermore, a study of graduating high school students indicated that most young adults viewed their high school counselors as fair or poor regarding their college advice (Johnson & Rochkind, 2010). This study also yielded a result of nearly half of the students indicating that they felt like their counselors saw them as 'just another face in the crowd'. Other researchers have specifically examined school counselors' ability to deliver career counseling and found that school counselors spend

considerably less time focusing on career development than on personal-social and academic development (Anctil, Smith, Schenck & Dahir 2012). School counselor preparation at the master's level, as well as ongoing training could play a pivotal role in how school counselors most effectively address college and career readiness in practice with students. Therefore, the researcher's objective of examining school counselor educators' experiences of introducing school counseling graduate students to resources such as the ASCA National Model and MBSS to address college and career readiness concerns can potentially help school counseling professionals identify specific strategies that can be implemented in school counseling graduate programs.

Non-Cognitive Components of College Readiness

A pioneer in the field of research in college readiness, William Sedlacek (1993) identified eight essential non-cognitive components of college readiness including: positive self-concept regarding academics, realistic self-appraisal, understanding/dealing with racism, long-term goal setting, having an available support person, demonstrated experience and success with leadership, community service, and knowledge acquired in/about a field. In 2007, Conley went on to suggest that there are four key areas which interact with and affect one another including: identifying key cognitive strategies, key content knowledge, academic behaviors, and contextual skills and awareness which highlight the important belief that these elements are interconnected. Therefore, Conley (2007) suggested that the idea of readiness should be considered a process in which growth in one area impacts readiness in other areas. In 2010, Conley published his book "College and Career Ready: Helping all students succeed beyond high school" in which he expands on his four key dimensions of college and career readiness framework and creates an outline of strategies that are specific to college and career readiness. In an effort to shed light on

the importance of ensuring all American K-12 students are college and career ready while possessing the essential non-cognitive components of college readiness, ASCA and the White House teamed up with other professional organizations to help support school counselor's efforts in addressing college and career readiness concerns with all American students.

The Reach Higher Initiative

In 2014, ASCA announced that they were “pleased to be working with the White House on the Reach Higher Initiative” (ASCA, 2014) which was spearheaded by former First Lady Michelle Obama and set out to inspire all American students to become college and career ready. In an official statement released by Barack Obama (The White House, 2014) the former president shines light on the fact that “a generation ago, we led all nations in college completion, but today, ten countries have passed us” and goes on to challenge all Americans to reclaim the lead of college completion by the year 2020. Correspondingly, the Reach Higher initiative has a vision of accomplishing the “American Dream” which calls on students to take charge of their future by completing their education past high school, whether it be a professional training program, community college, or a four-year college or university. In order to achieve this dream, the Reach Higher initiative helps students become familiar with education requirements, understand financial aid eligibility, uses social media to help prepare students for life after high school, assists school administrators in developing successful school counseling programs, promotes professional development, and supports high school counselors in ensuring all students are college and career ready. With the adaptations of programs such as: Better Make Better, School Counselor of the Year, UpNext, College Signing Day, Beating the Odds, and a partnership with the Common Application, the Reach Higher initiative has led to over 600,000 students deciding to participate in college signing day events in 2018, generated over 40,000

student commitments online, and has resulted in approximately 1,700,000 students who have been reached over the past four years by 3,000 school counselors who have attended Reach Higher Conventions.

In addition to ASCA and the Reach Higher initiative, other professional organizations have emphasized the school counselor's role as essential in ensuring students are prepared for post-secondary success including: The Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP), National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC), National Career Development Association (NCDA), and the College Board National Office for School Counselor Advocacy (NOSCA). In an effort to support school counselors in ensuring all students are college and career ready, The College Board National Office for School Counselor Advocacy (NOSCA) has identified Eight Components of College and Career Readiness which was designed to provide a systemic approach for school counselors as they promote college and career readiness among all students. The National Career Development Association (NCDA) also has a website which provides resources for school career counselors including 'internet sites for career planning' and 'occupational trends'. Finally, NACAC (2000) also provided school counselors with a step by step blueprint intended on assisting high school counselors to providing college readiness counseling.

Models of College and Career Readiness Counseling

Although the primary college and career readiness resource of this dissertation is ASCA's *Mindsets & Behaviors for Student Success: K-12 College and Career Readiness Standards for Every Student* (ASCA, 2014), it is important to make note that other organizations have also developed resources that school counseling professionals can use when addressing the topic of college and career readiness with students. The following models of college and career readiness

counseling will be briefly described as they are also strategies that school counseling professionals can use when addressing the topic of college and career readiness with students.

The College Board National Office for School Counselor Advocacy (NOSCA) developed a model which focuses on the school counselor's role in ensuring college and career readiness among K-12 students. According to NOSCA, the Eight Components of College and Career Readiness (NOSCA, 2012) are designed to provide a systemic approach for school counselors as they promote college and career readiness among all students which include: college aspiration, academic planning for college and career readiness, enrichment and extracurricular engagement, college and career exploration and selection processes, college and career assessments, college affordability planning, college and career admission processes, and transition from High School graduation to college enrollment.

By providing school counselors with a framework that encourages a systems approach, multicultural considerations, and early interventions with students, the goal of NOSCA's Eight Components of College and Career Readiness is to guide school counselors as they support all students in becoming college and career ready.

Originally founded in 1913, The National Vocational Guidance Association (NVGA) officially changed its name to The National Career Development Association (NCDA) in 1985 and is the longest active career development association in the world has also set out to assist school counseling professionals in preparing students for life after graduation (NCDA, 1985). With a mission of providing professional development and promoting advocacy to practitioners who inspire students to achieve career goals, the NCDA's primary focus is to help to ensure students are college and career ready. The organization's website includes resources for school career counselors and educational specialists including career information resources, career

assessment instruments group updates, and information about professional development opportunities which will potentially provide additional resources for school counselors as they develop a successful college and career counseling program.

NACAC also provides a step by step blueprint intended to assist high school counselors in providing college readiness counseling. The statement on Counselor Competencies (NACAC, 2000) outlines eight competency areas for school counselors including: the possession and demonstration of exemplary counseling and communication skills, the ability to understand and promote student development and achievement, the ability to facilitate transitions and counsel students toward the realization of their full educational potential, the ability to recognize, appreciate, and serve cultural differences and the special needs of students and families, the demonstration of appropriate ethical behavior and professional conduct in the fulfillment of roles and responsibilities, the ability to develop, collect, analyze, and interpret data, the demonstration of advocacy and leadership in advancing the concerns of students, and the ability to organize and integrate the precollege guidance and counseling component into the total school guidance program (pp. 3–8).

School Counselor Interventions to Promote College and Career Readiness

Recently, Paolini (2019) identified best practices that school counselors can implement to promote college and career readiness including: parental involvement, community outreach, creating a college-going culture, academic planning for college and career readiness, using data, assisting with college applications and admissions, assisting with college and career assessments, facilitating workshops which explains college affordability and the FAFSA process, building family and community partnerships, and leading college and career clubs. Similarly, other researchers have encouraged school counselors to develop a plan that adequately prepares

students for both career and college by recommending that they consistently collect and analyze data to uncover equity gaps that are impeding student readiness and then using that data to develop a response to those problems (Hines, Lemons, & Crews, 2011).

By creating a college-going culture within their schools, it is suggested that school counselors are much better prepared to promote college and career readiness as they are typically able to provide resources relating to the college application process, share information regarding financial aid opportunities, and facilitate skill building exercises which are essential components in preparing students for college (Bryan, Moore-Thomas, Day-Vines, & Holcomb-McCoy, 2011; Corwin & Tierney, 2007; and Holland, 2010). It has also been reported that students who attend schools with a higher college-going culture are 1.6 times more likely to apply to a four-year college compared to students who attend schools who have not adopted a college-going culture (Robinson & Roksa, 2016). Researchers have also identified four aspects school counselors should consider when trying to create a college-going culture including: counseling department structure and organization, early college programming and skill building, partnerships between school counselors and other school administrators, teachers, and staff to establish and continue the culture, and resources to ensure the programs and initiatives can be delivered (McKillip et al., 2012). Despite the multiple strategies, interventions, and resources that are available to help school counselors address the college and career readiness concerns of students, there appears to be an obvious lack of literature related to how current school counselor educators experience addressing the topic of college and career readiness with school counseling graduate students.

Determined to advocate for the school counselor's role in helping students meet the "American Dream," ASCA turned to professional school counselors, school counselor educators and a thorough review of the literature related to college and career readiness in schools and

developed the *Mindsets & Behaviors for Student Success: K-12 College and Career-Readiness Standards for Every Student* resource. ASCA's MBSS provides school counselors with an evidence-based document which can be used to assist them as they engage in conversations and interventions that will assist students in developing post-secondary plans. Because ASCA's MBSS is a document that was created after an extensive literature review and is supported by many school counseling professionals and organizations, the researcher has decided to make this resource a key component in data collection in understanding school counseling professionals experiences of addressing college and career readiness in school counseling programs.

American School Counselor Association

Established in 1952, The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) supports school counselors' efforts in helping students focus on career, academic, and social/emotional development so they can achieve success in school and are prepared to be successful after graduating high school (ASCA, 2018). With the *mission* of ASCA being to advocate for the school counseling profession and promote professionalism and ethical practices, the organization has a *vision* of expanding the image of the school counseling profession through advocacy, leadership, collaboration and systemic change (ASCA, 2018). In addition to helping define the role of the school counselor, ASCA offers professional development opportunities, releases bi-monthly magazines which allow school counselors to stay up-to-date with current research and resources, addresses common ethical and legal concerns for school counselors, and has been a leading force in aiding school counselors in addressing college and career readiness among K-12 students. Researchers have suggested that school counselors who implement a Recognized ASCA Model program (RAMP) understand the importance of using data to support student

achievement and also contend that “the RAMP process appears to have a positive impact on data practices” (Young & Kaffenberger, 2011, p.63).

Although there have been various school counseling models and expert opinions relating to the school counselors’ role in addressing college and career readiness; it was not until ASCA took a vigorous stance and adopted the ASCA National Standards (Campbell & Dahir, 1997) to help unify school counselor’s efforts in developing a comprehensive school counseling program that is supported by student data (Studer, 2015). According to ASCA (2017), a comprehensive school counseling program should be an integral component of the school’s mission and should identify the knowledge and skills all students should acquire as a result of the school counseling program. In 2017, ASCA adopted their *School Counselor and Career Development Position* statement which directly addresses the school counselor’s role as it relates to college and career readiness among K-12 students. This position statement recognizes student individuality and encourages school counselors to collaborate with families, educational staff, and communities in assisting students as they consider and determine appropriate postsecondary pathways to success including (but not limited to): the military (Alger & Luke, 2015), career technical certificate, and college programs. Additionally, ASCA’s (2017) position statement identifies 14 roles of the school counselor as it relates to college and career readiness including: introducing careers and the world of work beginning in lower elementary schools (pre K-3), working with students to identify their interests, abilities, specific career and postsecondary plans, and connecting students to early college programs (ASCA, 2017).

Although ASCA’s original National Model was created in 2003, the fourth edition was recently released to provide states, districts, and schools with an updated evidenced-based framework to support school counseling professionals in developing a comprehensive school

counseling program (2019). According to ASCA (2017), a comprehensive and evidence-based school counseling program is driven by data and supported by the framework of the ASCA National Model. The foundation of this framework examines how school counselors contribute to student achievement by promoting career-planning, academic achievement, and personal/social development. Consistent throughout all three updates (2005, 2012, and 2019), the ASCA National Model has stressed that the role of the school counselor in ensuring all (K-12) students are college and career ready is essential. Currently, ASCA continues to double down on advocating for the role of the school counselor as it relates to ensuring all students are college and career ready as the fourth edition is specifically aligned with ASCA's *Mindsets & Behaviors for Student Success: K-12 College and Career Readiness Standards for Every Student* to assist school counselors in identifying student mindsets and behaviors (ASCA, 2019).

Mindset & Behaviors for Student Success

On the first page of the newest edition of the ASCA National Model (ASCA, 2019) the *Mindsets & Behaviors for Student Success: K-12 College and Career-Readiness Standards for Every Student* are introduced as a primary document that reflects the six mindsets school counselors should encourage their students to have as well as the 26 behavior standards students should be able to demonstrate by the completion of high school. Officially released in 2014 to serve as the next generation of ASCA's National student standards by reflecting the trends of the profession, the purpose of ASCA's MBSS is to describe the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that research suggests students need in order to achieve college and career readiness, academic success, and social/emotional development. The six "mindsets" included in ASCA's MBSS refer to the attitudes or beliefs students should have about themselves in relation to academic work and are exhibited within ASCA's 29 behavior standards which reflect observable behaviors that

are commonly associated with being a successful student. School counselors are able to utilize ASCA's MBSS to identify specific mindsets and behaviors their students should focus on and ultimately determine which classroom lessons, activities, or counseling strategies would be best suited to help students set and achieve college and career goals.

Updating the Standards

Seventeen years after the innovative introduction of the ASCA National Standards (Campbell & Dahir, 1997), ASCA officially updated its standards to focus on career, academic, and social/emotional domains through the creation of the *Mindsets & Behaviors for Student Success: K-12 College and Career Readiness Standards for Every Student* (ASCA, 2014) resource. Although ASCA's original standards (Campbell & Dahir, 1997) have served the school counseling profession well (Sparks, 2014) researchers such as Amatea and Clark (2005) questioned if those standards were able to reflect current evidence-based practices and research.

In 2005, Amatea and Clark used a grounded theory method to assess administrator's perceptions of the role of the school counselor in public elementary, middle, and high schools. Twenty-three administrators were interviewed in order to find out how they conceptualize the role of the school counselor. Findings of this study suggested that there needs to be a "more conscious development of counselor leadership skills and role expectations by counselors themselves and by counselor preparation programs" (Amatea and Clark, 2005, p. 16). The researchers went on to challenge ASCA to reexamine their standards and noted that although the original student standards (Campbell & Dahir, 1997) and the ASCA National Model (2003) provide a philosophical framework for counselors, "the question remains as to whether counselors and administrators agree that this new model provides the best way to carry out their mutual mission in schools" (Amatea & Clark, 2005, p.25). In 2012, ASCA responded to the

challenge of educational reform by standardizing the role of the school counselor by developing ASCA's Mindsets and Behaviors for Student Success.

As a leading force for the school counseling profession, ASCA has consistently advocated that school counselors are essential in promoting college and career readiness among all K-12 students. Research related to college and career readiness has helped experts develop the *Mindsets & Behaviors for Student Success: K-12 College and Career Readiness Standards for Every Student* (ASCA, 2014) which can be operationalized through the use of supporting resources provided by ASCA including: *Student Competencies*, *Career Conversation Starters*, and the *Program Planning Tool*. School Counselors and other professionals in the field are able to use ASCA's MBSS to help them navigate through ASCA's school competencies database as they search for learning objectives specific to the grade levels, mindsets, and behaviors they are planning to address. School counselors are also able to operationalize these mindsets and behaviors through the use of ASCA's Career Conversation Starters resource which provides specific questions school counselors can ask to address each of the 35 mindsets and behaviors. Finally, ASCA has provided school counselors with a planning tool which can be used in making sure counselors are prepared to address the specific needs of students related to each mindset and behavior including college and career readiness concerns.

ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors for Student Success

In an effort to assist school counselors in ensuring all students are college and career ready, ASCA officially released the MBSS in 2014. ASCA's Mindsets and Behaviors can be described as the beliefs and observable behaviors students need to achieve success. Serving as a guide to help school counselors in addressing the knowledge, skills, and attitudes students need to be successful after graduating high school, ASCA's MBSS explicitly focuses on preparing K-

12 students for college and career readiness (Abel & Oliver, 2018). Designed to address the noncognitive factors associated in a student's educational development, ASCA's MBSS is an evidence-based resource which aides school counselors in designing individual and group interventions in the area of college and career readiness for K-12 students (Curry, 2018).

ASCA's MBSS is comprised of 35 standards which focus on addressing the self-regulatory attitudes and behaviors students should possess after high school in college and the workplace. Assistant Director of ASCA, Dr. Eric Sparks, suggests that although the *ASCA National Standards for Students* (Campbell & Dahir, 1997) were an important piece of the profession that has served school counselors well for many years – students, schools, and education as a whole has changed so much over the years, that an updated set of standards was essential to reflect current data on best practices of how school counseling professionals can assist students in becoming college and career ready (Sparks, 2014).

History

In 2012, the *College and Career Readiness Committee* was formed and set out to develop *ASCA's Mindsets & Behaviors for Student Success: K-12 College and Career-Readiness Standards for Every Student* (ASCA, 2014) to serve as the next generation of *ASCA's National Standards for Students* and reflect the trends of the profession (ASCA, 2012). Comprised of representatives from the American School Counselor Association, Association for Career and Technical Education, Partnership for 21st Century Skills, CollegeBoard, National College Access Network, NACAC, National Association of State Directors of Career Technical Education Consortium, and The Education Trust, the College and Career Readiness Committee set out to *revisit, rethink* and *rejuvenate* ASCA's National Standards in order to ensure that the standards

align with educational trends, are up-to-date, and appropriate in helping students meet their educational goals (Sparks, 2014).

Beginning by brainstorming “how to define student success?” the college and career readiness committee focused on academic, behavior, and attendance data to determine how the student standards should be updated. A thorough literature review was then conducted on college and career readiness in order to gain a better sense of what research suggests is best practice to ensure students are college and career ready. The data was compiled to create a ‘large crosswalk’ organized around themes that demonstrate college and career readiness. Finally, in the summer of 2014, a draft of the MBSS was made available to the public which provided people with the opportunity to give feedback and offer suggestions on how the proposed new standards could be improved. All feedback was reviewed, changes were implemented, and the final version of the standards was released in August of 2014. (Sparks, 2014).

Although, the structure for the MBSS was primarily drawn from the work of Farrington et al. 2012, “Teaching Adolescents to Become Learners: The Role of Noncognitive Factors in Shaping School Performance: A Critical Literature Review” which provides a framework of literature suggesting what it means for students to be college and career ready, the final page of the MBSS (ASCA, 2014) includes fourteen additional resources that were used to develop ASCA’s mindsets and behaviors. Other organizations that are credited for producing useful documents in helping to create the revised ASCA student standards include: ACT, American School Counselor Association, AVID, Career Readiness Partner Council, National Board of Professional Teaching Standards, SREB, Achieve, College Board, Partnership for 21st Century Skills, University of Minnesota, CASEL, and The University of Chicago Consortium on Chicago School Research, and ACTE.

The Standards

The 35 standards which make up ASCA's MBSS can be split up into two categories: *Mindsets Standards* (6) and *Behavior Standards* (29). Each of these standards can be applied to at least one of ASCA's original domains: academic, career and social/emotional. The purpose of these standards is to identify and prioritize the specific attitudes, skills, and knowledge students should be able to demonstrate as a result of a school counseling program (ASCA, 2014).

The six Mindset Standards represent the mindsets school counselors should encourage all students to have. These standards are "related to the psycho-social attitudes or beliefs students have about themselves in relation to academic work" and are made up of "students' belief system as exhibited in behaviors" (ASCA, 2014 p. 1). Furthermore, the behavior standards are comprised of twenty-nine standards which represent behaviors that are commonly associated with being a successful student (ASCA, 2014). These behaviors are visible and suggest a student is engaged in the learning process. The Behavior Standards are organized into three subcategories: *Learning Strategies*, *Self-Management Skills* and *Social Skills*. It is suggested that these 29 behavior standards are directly influenced as a result of the school counseling program as the school counselor attempts to apply these standards to each of ASCA's three domains (ASCA, 2014).

Domains

The ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors for Student Success: K-12 College- and Career-Readiness Standards for Every Student resource is comprised of 35 "research-based standards" which can be applied to three broad domains: Academic Development, Career Development and Social/Emotional Development. ASCA defines each domain as follows: **Academic Development** is defined as "*Standards guiding school counseling programs to implement*

strategies and activities to support and maximize each student's ability to learn." **Career Development** refers to *"Standards guiding school counseling programs to help students 1) understand the connection between school and the world of work and 2) plan for and make a successful transition from school to postsecondary education and/or the world of work and from job to job across the life span."* Finally, ASCA defines **Social/Emotional Development** as *"Standards guiding school counseling programs to help students manage emotions and learn and apply interpersonal skills"* (ASCA, 2014, p.1). School counselors are able to apply all 35 standards to at least one of these domains depending on the focus of the lesson or needs of the student(s). School counselors are also able to operationalize these mindset and behavior standards when evaluating student progress, search for student competencies, identify conversation starters, and develop a comprehensive school counseling program which is able to address each of ASCA's 35 mindsets and behaviors.

How ASCA's MBSS Can be Operationalized

Although the extensive literature review that school counseling experts engaged in to develop ASCA's MBSS has helped secure the support of many school counseling professionals, simply identifying which mindsets and/or behaviors to focus on is only the first step in ensuring students are college and career ready. Curry (2018) identified specific strategies school counselors can infuse after identifying the specific mindsets and behaviors students should develop including assisting parents in engaging in career development conversations with their children and addressing the communication skills needed to achieve college and career readiness. Additionally, Studer (2016) introduces school counseling practicum and internship students to ASCA's MBSS as an evidence-based resource that can assist them in helping students achieve their career, academic, and social/emotional goals. In her 2016 text "A Guide to Practicum and

Internship For School Counselors-In-Training”, Studer provides a conceptual application activity (p. 130) which challenges school counselors in training to use school data along with the MBSS to develop three SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, results-oriented, and time-bound) goals that their site could potentially target. In addition to the suggestions of how school counselors can operationalize the MBSS listed above, ASCA has also developed supplemental resources that school counselors can use once they have identified which mindset and/or behavior standards they want to help students develop. School counselors are able to operationalize all 35 Mindset and Behavior standards through ASCA’s Student Competencies Database (2015), Career Conversation Starters resource, and the Mindset and Behavior Planning Tool.

Competencies

After school counselors have identified the mindset and behavior standards relevant to a student’s educational needs, they are able to operationalize those standards through the use of ASCA’s online database which generates specific grade-level student competencies (ASCA, 2015). Competencies, which ASCA describes as specific learning objectives for a lesson or activity can be uploaded by school counselor educators, school counselors, and other school counseling professionals are made available to the public once approved by ASCA. Competencies are typically directly aligned with Common Core and State standards and designed to be measurable which ensures students are able to track their progress towards meeting each standard.

Once on ASCA’s Competencies database, visitors can select a student’s grade level (K-2, 3-5, 6-8, 9-12), the specific mindsets and behaviors that have been identified, as well as the career, academic, or social/emotional domain the school counselor is planning to address. The

database is then able to generate specific learning objectives that school counselors can use when developing interventions with their students. Competencies are intended to act like a bridge to curriculum standards as they connect ASCA's Mindsets & Behavior Standards to Common Core and State standards (Sparks, 2014). Because ASCA's competencies database is continuously updated, school counseling professionals are encouraged to submit competencies that align with common core (or state) standards.

Career Conversation Starters

In addition to using ASCA's MBSS to identify and develop student competencies, ASCA has also provided school counselors with a resource that can help them begin conversations relating college and career readiness concerns including "Question Starters" which are specific to each of ASCA's 35 mindsets and behavior standards. Once school counselors have identified which mindsets and/or behavior standards are necessary to explore with each student, they are able to utilize this resource to identify direct and appropriate questions to ask that student as it relates to each standard. For example, ASCA's Career Conversation Starters resource provides prompts such as: *"After taking the career assessments, what do you notice is important to you in a career?"* which directly addresses **B-LS 4: Apply self-motivation and self-direction to learning**, *"What are you currently doing that is helping you prepare for your life after high school? Socially? Academically? Career related?"* to address **B-LS7: Identify long- and short-term academic, career and social/emotional goals**, and *"As you think about your future career, what adults might help you think about or reach your future career goals?"* which addresses **B-SS 3 Create relationships with adults that support success**. Because ASCA's Question Starters resource provides specific questions that are aligned with the evidence-based MBSS, novice

school counselors can feel more confident in engaging in college and career conversations with their students.

Planning Tool

In addition to providing school counselors with the Student Competencies Database and the Career Conversation Starters resource, ASCA has also developed a planning tool which was designed to assist school counselors in addressing the potential gaps in their school counseling program. Similar to ASCA's conversation starters resource, ASCA's Mindset & Behaviors: the Program Planning Tool is also divided into four sections: Mindsets, Learning Strategies, Self-Management Skills, and Social Skills. Each of the four sections of the planning tool is supported by three columns which are represented by ASCA's domains: academic, career, and social/emotional. After reviewing the school counseling curriculum action plan, group plans, and personal knowledge of each grade level, school counselors are able use the planning tool to determine the extent each standard is represented by each grade level by recording notes in each column. For example: a school counseling department which works closely with 9th graders in developing a four-year plan can confidently input a "9" in the academic and career column that is represented by **B-SMS 5 – Demonstrate perseverance to achieve long- and short-term goals**. As school counselors go through each of the 35 Mindset and Behavior standards, they are able to ensure they have a specific plan of addressing the mindset and/or behavior standards within each of the three domains. School counselors who work with a team of other school counselors can use this tool as they ensure their program is able to address each of the three domains within all four sections. Similarly, school counselors who work by themselves can use this tool to reflect on the lessons and activities they currently use to address each standard. Although school counselors are not required to cover every standard at every grade level, ASCA's planning tool

can help provide school counselors with a broad over-view in determining if they are equipped to address major student concerns.

Effectiveness of The ASCA National Model

The ASCA National Model has been adopted by many school counseling programs and has gained the support of many school counseling professionals which has resulted in a wide range of literature that examines the effectiveness of the ASCA National Model and its accompanying resources (Abel, Oliver, Keller, McAulay, & Piatek 2015; Carey & Dimmitt, 2012; Goodman-Scott, Betters-Bubon, & Donohue, 2015; Pérusse, Poynton, Jennifer, & Goodnough, 2015; Pyne, 2011; Sanders, Welfare & Culver, 2014; Scarborough, 2005; Studer, 2015; and Wilkerson, Pérusse & Hughes, 2013).

Pyne (2011) suggests school counselors who implement the ASCA National Model are much more satisfied with their profession and tend to be more committed to their career. Other researchers suggest school counselors who implement a strong ASCA National Model program resulted higher test scores, decreased suspensions rates, increased attendance, and enhanced student achievement (Carey & Dimmitt, 2012). School counselors who consistently implement the ASCA National Model are also typically better equipped to establish a safe school climate which encourages students' academic, career, and social/emotional development (Goodman-Scott, Betters-Bubon, & Donohue, 2015). Militello and Janson (2014) also support the mission of ASCA as they credit the association for supporting school counselors' efforts in helping students meet their academic, social and career goals resulting in students becoming much more successful in school.

Other researchers have specifically examined ASCA's MBSS when addressing career readiness with K-12 students and indicated that "most school counselors would likely agree that

non-cognitive skills such as those found in the MBSS are important in building a positive school culture that is supportive and accepting of all students” (Abel et al., 2015, p. 122). Researchers (Wilkerson, Pérusse and Hughes, 2013) have also suggested that students who graduated from K-12 schools with a fully implemented ASCA National Model program typically result in positive academic achievement outcomes. Wilkerson et al.’s 2013 article includes quantitative data that consisted of 1,972 participants and compared Recognized ASCA Model Programs (RAMP schools) to a control group and concluded that because there has been a significant increase in the number of comprehensive school counseling programs, further research in the area the school counselor’s role addressing college and career readiness concerns is necessary.

Answering the call, researchers have recently described career development issues as a life-long process that begins in early childhood (Pulliam & Bartek 2018) and implore school counseling professionals to research how college and career readiness is being addressed at the elementary level. In their 2018 article, Pulliam and Bartek examine theoretical frameworks, interventions, and professional standards related to the school counselor’s role in preparing elementary students to be college and career ready including ASCA’s MBSS. Although Pulliam and Bartek credit ASCA’s MBSS for providing guidance to school counselors, the researchers suggest that many school counselors often “lack direction when considering ways to utilize these standards at different grade levels” (Pulliam & Bartek, 2018, p.357). Although school counselors are often unsure of evidence-based interventions that can be used to address college and career readiness concerns with students, the researcher of this study is interested in better understanding how counseling professionals are addressing college and career readiness at all levels of education.

In addition to examining how comprehensive school counseling programs can help K-12 students meet their career, academic, and social/emotional goals, researchers (Abel, Oliver, Keller, McAulay, & Piatek, 2015) used a paired samples *t* test to evaluate relationships between a school counselor's implementation of the Student Success Skills program of 203 elementary school students and teacher ratings of student competency on the five learning behaviors of ASCA's Mindsets & Behaviors for Student Success. The goal of Abel et al.'s (2015) practitioner research project was to improve the effectiveness of a school counselor program in a rural elementary school in the Midwest. In addition to yielding results that focused on coping skills, listening skills, and positive/supportive relationships, the results of Abel et al.'s (2015) study suggested that most school counselors are likely to agree that noncognitive skills such as those found in the MBSS are essential in building a positive school culture that fosters student growth.

ASCA has consistently challenged school counselors to consider their role in developing a plan to address career and college readiness concerns with K-12 students. Additionally, many researchers have used the ASCA National Model in attempting to better understand how school counselors have been able to address college and career readiness concerns with their students. Considering the extensive research process that was involved in creating the MBSS as well as the support this resource has received from a variety of experts in the field, it is expected that this tool will continue to serve as a resource for school counselors for generations to come. Therefore, it is imperative that school counseling professionals continue to try to understand how school counselors have been addressing college and career readiness concerns and how those methods can be improved.

School Counselor Preparation in Addressing College and Career Readiness

Although research indicates that most high school graduates have identified college and career readiness as a top priority (McKillip et al., 2012), it is also reported that both public and private high school counselors only spend approximately 21% of their time focusing on post-secondary planning (Clinedinst & Koranteng, 2017). Furthermore, even though school counseling professionals tend to agree that effective college and career counseling requires a strong foundation that is established through graduate programs and field-based training, researchers have continuously advocated that counseling graduate programs are not adequately preparing future school counselors to effectively engage in college and career counseling (Bridgeland and Bruce, 2011; Brown 2018; Bryan, Holcomb-McCoy, Moore-Thomas, & Day-Vines, 2009; Hines, Lemons, & Crews 2011; McDonough, 2005; Morgan, Greenwaldt & Gosselin, 2014; Savitz-Romer, 2012). According to the results of study which surveyed more than 5,300 middle and high school counselors, only 16% of school counselors felt “very well trained” to address the topic of college and career readiness with students, 28% believed their training did not prepare them very well for their job, and 56% indicated to feeling only somewhat trained (Bridgeland & Bruce, 2011). Furthermore, other researchers specifically interviewed school counselors regarding their experiences working in a school that implements a comprehensive college and career readiness program and determined that they have diverse views on their own perceptions and preparation of the school counselors role in implementing the program (Alger & Luke, 2015). This section will review research related to how school counseling programs, school counseling educators, and school counselors have experienced learning about addressing college and career readiness in the K-12 setting.

School Counseling Programs

According to ASCA (2012), effective school counseling preparation programs should provide effective instruction and trainings that introduce future school counselors to the knowledge, skills and attitudes students should possess when preparing for life after high school. Furthermore, the CACREP standards (2016) serves as a guide that provides counseling graduate programs with essential outlines and standards that future counselors should be familiar with. Although the CACREP standards were not originally designed to support the school counselor's role in addressing college and career readiness (Campbell & Dahir, 1997; Pérusse, Goodnough, & Noel, 2001), a 2016 update of the standards includes revisions and a recommendation that counselor education programs are encouraged to address the topic with school counseling students (CACREP, 2014, 5.G.3i). Although the push for preparing future school counselors to be equipped to address college and career readiness in schools is gaining stride, it is important to note that CACREP's suggestion of covering college readiness in graduate programs is not a requirement by CACREP. Researchers have suggested that "without requirements that specifically call for targeted college readiness counseling to be integrated into pre-service training models, counselor educators may not be in a position to include it in graduate curricula" and added that "the implications of this are worthy of close attention." (Savitz-Romer, 2012 p.3).

In 2014, nine professional organizations representing college access and school counseling professionals worked together to form the Council of National School Counseling and College Access Organizations with a primary goal of analyzing the current state of college readiness counseling training (Gilfillan, 2108). In 2016, the Council published a report which reviewed college readiness coursework for school counselors. Although this report identified over 270 school counseling programs that are accredited by CACREP, it specifically focused on 42 institutions that offered a course specifically related to college admission or readiness

counseling. Because this report was the first of its kind and only focused on 42 institutions, “further research into other school counseling programs is needed.” (Gilfillan, 2018, p.4). A similar report conducted by the National Consortium for School Counseling and Postsecondary Success (NCSCPS) also identified how a lack of research specific to college readiness counseling “makes it difficult to provide recommendations on how to best train school counselors” (Gilfillan, 2018 p.4).

Since the current pathway for perspective school counselors to gain employment in the United States is by earning a master’s degree in counseling and obtaining licensure by the state in which they completed their program (Savitz-Romer, 2012), it becomes essential that potential school counselors are being exposed to college and career readiness strategies and resources during graduate programs (ASCA, 2014). Therefore, given the substantial amount of research which views the school counselor’s role in addressing college and career readiness among K-12 students as being invaluable, it becomes critical to examine how counselor educators currently experience addressing college and career readiness in school counseling graduate programs.

School Counselor Educators

Although learning how to approach college readiness counseling is assumed to be a part of a graduate student’s school counseling orientation and practicum/internship experience, some experts recommend college readiness counseling be taught throughout the student’s master’s program via additional coursework and learning opportunities (Brown et al., 2016; Gilifillan, 2018). In an effort to address the lack of preparation novice school counselors have been reporting as to why they believe they are not adequately prepared to address college and career concerns, Hines, Lemons and Crews (2011), list “five steps for change” which provides stakeholders with specific strategies that can help school counselors assist students in meeting

their college and career goals including: revise the job descriptions for school counselors so they focus on equitable education and on preparing all students for college and career, shift university training programs so they center on an effective school counseling approach to college and career readiness, align state credential requirements so that all school counselors receive adequate college and career readiness training, support school counselors with college and career readiness professional development opportunities, and align school counselor evaluations to college and career readiness outcomes. The “five steps for change” can provide school counseling preparation programs with a blueprint of appropriate steps to take in developing a college and career readiness plan.

In addition to the five steps for change, other researchers (Brott, 2006; Brown 2018; Curry 2018; Pyne, 2011; Savitz-Romer, 2012; Studer, 2016) have also provided examples of how school counselor educators can promote college and career readiness in school counseling graduate programs. Pyne (2011) recommends school counselor educators diligently expose their students to “best-practice models” in counselor education programs as an avenue to better prepare counselors. Brown (2018), proposed a teaching assignment to help prepare future school counselors in conducting college and career counseling interviews. Also, in a 2012 National Association for College Admission Counseling discussion paper which focuses on “*Re-envisioning How We Prepare Our College Readiness Workforce*”, Savitz-Romer uses data to propose eight policy recommendations including suggestions such as: encourage individual states to add college readiness counseling coursework to the required coursework for licensure in school counseling, target licensing renewal requirements to support college readiness counseling, and provide financial support for school districts to host college readiness-oriented trainings for their staff. Despite the recommendations of how school counseling programs can incorporate

college and career readiness strategies into their graduate curriculum, research also suggests school counselor preparation programs are typically not preparing future counselors to confidently address college and career readiness concerns with students.

A lack of preparation related to the school counselor's role in ensuring students are ready for college can be traced back to 2005, as McDonough highlights the idea that school counselors typically have little to no training relating to financial aid and they are commonly unprepared to help students and families understand the cost of college. More recently, Morgan, Greenwaldt & Gosselin (2014) conclude that school counselors are vastly underprepared to engage in career counseling as their qualitative study explored school counselors' perceptions related to career counseling and generated themes such as self-doubt, reliance on colleagues, and dependence on technology. Similarly, Brown et al., 2016, used a survey and focus group to compare school counselors' and school counselor educators' perceptions of their graduate training specific to NOSCA's eight components of college and career readiness. The results of this study identified large discrepancies between how well school counselors believed their graduate programs prepared them to address NOSCA's eight components of college and career readiness and compared the results to the perceptions of how well school counselor educators believed they were addressing the topic. In other words, school counselor educators reported to believe they were able to sufficiently cover the topic of college and career readiness while their students report not feeling prepared. Furthermore, the results of this study also indicated that less than half of the school counselors surveyed felt their program adequately prepared them to address seven out of the eight components.

Because school counselors often seek additional training related to college and career counseling after completing graduate programs, it can be further inferred that graduate programs

are not adequately preparing future school counselors to promote a successful college and career readiness program. Recently, Brown (2018) highlighted a position paper which was developed by the Association for Counselor Education and Supervision (ACES) and the National Career Development Association (NCDA) in 2000 which called attention to the career counseling education counselors-in-training should be receiving within their graduate programs. Despite the abundance of research which recognizes the school counselor's role in addressing college and career readiness as critical, researchers such as Brown (2018) reiterate a "paucity of research" relating to why school counselor educators have historically been unable to effectively prepare future school counselors to be ready to engage in effective college and career readiness counseling.

School Counselors

In 2016, The Council of National School Counseling & College Access Organizations suggested that counselor education programs should be designed to address the school counselor's role related to college and career readiness in career counseling courses. A 2011 National Survey of school counselors revealed only about a third of public-school counselors reported that they felt comfortable engaging in college and career counseling (Bridgeland & Bruce, 2011). In the same report, only about 16 percent of high school counselors viewed their graduate training program as *highly effective* (Bridgeland & Bruce, 2011). Although many researchers have concluded that although school counselors often admit that they want to do more in the area of career counseling, they are discouraged by the lack of training they received in their school counseling graduate program (Bridgeland & Bruce, 2011; Brown, 2018; Morgan, Greenwaldt, & Gosselin, 2014) which is cause for further exploration on the topic.

Although research has clearly indicated that college readiness counseling is a fundamental component of a successful school counseling program, multiple researchers maintain the belief that college and career readiness tends to be a neglected part of graduate training programs as many school counselors wish they had more academic coursework related to college readiness counseling (Savitz-Romer, 2012). In an examination of urban high school counselors' experiences and perceptions of how well they believe their school counseling graduate program was able to prepare them to be able to engage in college and career readiness counseling, Savitz-Romer proposes that the abundance of research, models, strategies, tools and theories that are available to school counseling professionals, these resources and interventions are hardly discussed in graduate training programs (Savitz-Romer, 2012).

Other Reasons School Counselors Struggle with meeting the “American Dream”

In addition to an overwhelmingly reported lack of preparation in school counseling graduate programs (Hines, Lemons, & Crews, 2011; Morgan, Greenwaldt & Gosselin, 2014; Savitz-Romer, 2012), other researchers have examined additional barriers school counselors have reported to have faced when attempting to successfully ensure all students are college and career ready (ASCA, 2014; Hines, Lemons, & Crews, 2011; Johnson, & Rochkind, 2010; Savitz-Romer, 2012; U.S. Department of Education, 2015). Other specific roadblocks that school counselors have reported as difficulties in ensuring all students are college and career ready include: having large caseloads (Bryan, Holcomb-McCoy, Moore-Thomas, and Day-Vines, 2009), being overworked (Johnson, & Rochkind, 2010), and an overflow of professionals attempting to address the issue (Savitz-Romer, 2012).

One reason school counselors have reported to struggle to ensure all students are ready for life after graduation relates to the overwhelming caseloads many school counselors are faced

with. According to ASCA (2014), the recommended caseload is 250 students per counselor, however, the average school counselor caseload in the United States was 476 students during the 2013–2014 school year (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). Research has supported the assertion that students are less likely to seek out the school counselor for college information in schools with higher counselor caseloads (Bryan, Holcomb-McCoy, Moore-Thomas, & Day-Vines, 2009). Similarly, researchers have claimed that public school counselors are often overworked and underprepared when it comes to assisting students in making decisions about life after graduation which discourages these school counselors in seeking additional support in developing a plan to promote college and career readiness (Johnson & Rochkind, 2010).

Another issue which has been reported to hinder school counselors' ability to navigate students toward college and career readiness is that there are currently numerous professionals who are tasked with assisting students to become college and career ready including: school counselors, professionals from community-based organizations, independent counselors, and college and university staff. A consequence of having too many 'chefs in the kitchen' is that the training experienced by these professionals can differ immensely, resulting in an inconsistent curriculum/framework that professional helpers can draw from (Savitz-Romer, 2012).

Still another reason that researchers have called attention to is the fact that many colleges and universities require future school counselors to complete their graduate coursework alongside counseling students who are focused on different concentrations of mental health counseling including: marriage and family, grief, and addictions therapy. Because school counseling students are required to share their class time and learning experiences with individuals who do not share the interest of working in a school setting, school counselors are often limited in the area of graduate training specific to school counseling (Hines, Lemons, &

Crews, 2011). Subsequently, the fact that so many school counseling programs require students to complete their master's program with professors and students who have little-to-no interest in the area of school counseling presents even more evidence of how school counseling programs have not been able to adequately help their students meet the "American Dream."

Rationale

Despite the research (Abel & Oliver, 2018; Anctil et al. 2012; ASCA, 2014; Morgan, Greenwaldt & Gosselin, 2014) that examines effective strategies and interventions that are available to help school counseling programs and professionals develop a successful college and career readiness program, there remains a clear gap in the literature specific to how school counseling professionals have experienced addressing the topic of college and career readiness and the ASCA National Model in school counseling graduate programs.

Specific to ASCA's MBSS, there is an extensive amount of research which supports the implementation of ASCA's resource when addressing college and career readiness concerns with students (Curry 2018; Gilfilan, 2018; Goodman-Scott, Betters-Bubon, & Donohue, 2015; Studer 2016). However, there is an obvious gap in the literature specific to school counselor educator's experience and perception of how they have been able to implement college and career readiness strategies in their school counseling graduate programs. Moreover, researchers have specifically challenged "further inquiry is necessary to determine the possible impact of revised training and practice on the profession" and added "consistent dialogue between counselor educators and school counselors-in-training regarding role competence in career development may provide an avenue to overall effectiveness" (Morgan, Greenwaldt & Gosselin, 2014, p. 482).

Despite the extensive literature which supports the effectiveness of ASCA's MBSS when engaging in college and career readiness counseling with K-12 students as well as substantial

evidence which examines school counselors' perceptions related to the lack of training delivered in school counseling graduate programs, there is an obvious gap in the literature which provides school counseling professionals with a voice of how they experience addressing college and career readiness and the ASCA National Model. Because the research clearly indicates that school counselors typically feel underprepared to address college and career readiness concerns with K-12 students, the researcher of this dissertation engaged in a qualitative study to explore school counseling professionals' experiences using the ASCA National Model and the MBSS resource in school counseling programs.

Furthermore, the National Consortium for School Counseling and Postsecondary Success (NCSCPS) identified a lack of research related to school counseling professionals' experiences addressing college and career readiness counseling as a barrier in understanding how to most effectively train future school counselors in their "State of School Counseling" report (Brown et al, 2016). The researchers of this report designed a survey to compare how well school counselor educators believe to have been able to address NOSCA's college and career readiness components against school counseling students' experiences of addressing each of NOSCA's eight components during their graduate program. The survey identified all of NOSCA's eight components and requested participants to determine if that component was included in their graduate training program. The results of the study identified a strong discrepancy between school counseling professionals as more school counselor educators reported to have address NOSCA's components in each of the eight areas. In addition to presenting data that identifies a significant discrepancy between how well school counselor educators and novice school counselors perceive learning about college and career readiness in counseling graduate programs, the researchers of the NCSPS report specifically call on doctoral students and researchers to

engage in rigorous studies “to build an unassailable case supporting the counselor’s role in improved college and career attainment” (Brown et al, 2016 p.9). Similar to the 2016 NCSCPS report, the researcher of this study will use a survey and a focus group consisting of school counselors and school counselor educators to better understand how graduate programs have been able to address college and career readiness with future school counselors – except it will be specific to ASCA’s MBSS.

Therefore, the researcher’s primary goal of thoroughly examining school counseling professionals’ experiences of using ASCA’s MBSS to address college and career readiness in school counseling graduate programs can potentially help school counseling organizations and professionals identify effective strategies that can be used to ensure future school counselors are prepared to support K-12 students. In order to achieve this goal, the primary researcher will use the following section to introduce and explain the proposed methodology.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, the researcher used the insights gained from the literature review to support the methodological design of this study which examined school counseling professionals' experiences addressing the topic of college and career readiness in school counseling programs. Because the researcher was interested in learning about school counseling professionals' experiences addressing college and career readiness and the ASCA National Model (2019) in CACREP accredited school counseling programs a thematic analysis was used to research this topic. According to Braun & Clarke (2012), a thematic analysis is "a method for systemically identifying, organizing, and offering insight into patterns of meaning (themes) across a data set" (p. 57) and will be highlighted below. The researcher will begin this section by identifying the purpose of the study and the research questions that guide it. Next, the researcher will address his rationale for using a qualitative research approach that is supported by Braun & Clarke's (2006) six-step framework for conducting thematic analysis to develop themes and patterns derived from participant responses. The role of the researcher and research team will then be explained as well as an explanation of how the researcher intends to account for trustworthiness. Next, the researcher will describe the research plan and data collection procedures including an overview of the participant and sampling method, interview protocol, and a statement on how the data will be stored. Finally, the researcher described specific strategies that were used to increase the trustworthiness of the results. The responses of twelve school counselor educator interviews as well as the data that was collected from two focus groups comprised of five school counseling professionals allowed the research team to generate patterns and themes which can provide the field with insight to the research questions.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to explore school counseling professionals' experiences addressing college and career readiness in school counseling programs with a specific focus on the ASCA National Model. In fact, researchers have specifically deemed further inquiry as 'necessary' in determining the possible impact of revised training and practice in school counseling programs by suggesting, "consistent dialogue between counselor educators and school counselors-in-training regarding role competence in career development may provide an avenue to overall effectiveness" (Morgan, Greenwaldt & Gosselin, 2014, p. 482). In this study, the research team was able to examine the data that were collected from school counseling professionals and identify codes and patterns which were used to develop themes regarding how school counseling graduate programs and organizations such as ASCA and CACREP can better prepare school counselors-in-training to effectively address the topic of college and career readiness with students through the implementation of resources such as the ASCA National Model and *Mindsets & Behaviors for Student Success: K-12 College and Career Readiness Standards for Every Student* (ASCA, 2014).

Research Questions

The research questions that guided this study are:

1. What are school counseling professionals' experiences addressing college and career readiness?
2. What are school counseling professionals' experiences addressing ASCA's MBSS in CACREP accredited school counseling programs?

Research Design

The research team of this qualitative study engaged in a thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) to explore school counseling professionals' experiences addressing college and career readiness in school counseling programs. Twelve school counselor educators from CACREP accredited school counseling programs were recruited to share their experiences addressing college and career readiness in their school counseling graduate program via a semi-structured interview. Additionally, four high school counselors that recently graduate from a CACREP accredited school counseling program as well as one college and career readiness counselor participated in a focus group to help provide the field with personal examples of how school counseling experts have experienced addressing the topic.

Rationale for Methodology

Because the researcher was interested in developing patterns and themes in such a way that calls for in depth narrative data, this study and its research questions lend themselves to a qualitative design (Hays & Singh, 2012). Also, because the researcher engaged in purposive sampling by selecting participants based on their experiences, a qualitative research design was most appropriate (Hays & Singh, 2012). Furthermore, qualitative research approach is often used to provide a voice to individuals and groups that have not been heard before (Creswell, 2014). After the qualitative data was collected and transcribed, the research team engaged in a thematic analysis to develop codes and themes that provide insight to the research questions.

The research team of this study engaged in Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step approach to a thematic analysis to generate themes that reflected school counseling professionals' experiences addressing the topic of college and career readiness in school counseling programs. Researchers (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017) described a thematic analysis as the process of identifying themes and patterns within qualitative data in an attempt to make sense of collective

experiences and meanings, which is a primary goal of this study. In addition, the design of this study is consistent with other school counseling research which used a thematic analysis to identify patterns and themes that reflect textual data (Havlik, Brady, & Gavin 2014).

Description of the Methodology

Prior to distributing the completed transcripts to the research team, an initial team meeting was held to review the six-phases of Braun and Clarke's framework for doing a thematic analysis. After the research team was briefed on the coding procedures of this study, they were provided with a copy of the completed transcripts and reminded to adhere to the six steps of Braun and Clark's framework for doing a thematic analysis as described below.

The first phase, *becoming familiar with the data*, allowed the research team to read and re-read the transcripts. During this step, each research team member was introduced to the data and encouraged to take notes and record early impressions relevant to the research questions (Marguire & Delahunt, 2017). After becoming familiar with the data, the research team was able to *generate initial codes* in a meaningful and systemic way by not only coding explicit participant meaning, but also by providing interpretations about the data content (Braun & Clarke, 2012). During this initial coding stage, the research team had the opportunity to engage in open coding by recording succinct shorthand codes that were relevant in answering the research questions. The third phase, *searching for themes*, encouraged the research team to generate core themes of participant experiences. Although Braun and Clarke (2006) explain that there are no specific requirements of what can be considered a theme, themes were highlighted by their significance related to the research questions (Marguire & Delahunt, 2017). The fourth phase, *reviewing potential themes*, involved a recursive process which allowed the research team to confirm that their themes made sense, check to see if there are themes within themes

(subthemes), and question if any themes overlapped (Marguire & Delahunt, 2017). Phase five, *defining and naming themes*, provided the research team with a final chance to refine their themes and aimed at identifying the essence of the importance and significance of those themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006) was accomplished during the team meetings. The sixth and final stage consisted of the *final write-up* which was completed by the primary researcher.

Role of the Researcher

The primary researcher was able to recruit a diverse research team consisting of two team members to assist in transcript coding and data analysis. Furthermore, an external auditor was used to increase the reliability of the results. In addition to developing a competent research team and adhering to the professional and ethical obligations related to all aspects of this research, the primary researcher also engaged in additional strategies to ensure trustworthiness as described below.

Researcher's Characteristics and Potential Biases

The researcher of this study is a 33-year old Caucasian male who is completing a Ph.D. program in Counselor Education and Supervision at a CACREP accredited University. Throughout his experience as a doctorate student, the researcher has had the opportunity to supervise school counseling master's students as they completed their practicum and internship courses. During his experience as a school counseling supervisor, the topic of college and career readiness was seldomly addressed as most of the researcher's supervisees were placed in elementary school settings and the supervision focused on case conceptualizations.

The researcher of this study is also currently employed as a full-time school counselor in a K-8 urban public school. As the only school counselor for 860 students, the researcher is charged with addressing college and career readiness concerns with all students. Duties specific

to addressing the college and career readiness concerns of his students, includes the expectation that all students complete the Naviance (2002) tasks assigned to them by the school district as well as lead the high school application process for all 8th graders. Aside from being familiar with the ASCA National Model and the MBSS, the researcher was not expected to adhere to the ASCA National Model or any of their standards by his school district.

The primary researcher is also currently an adjunct professor of a counseling program which is on the verge of gaining CACREP accreditation. In addition to completing all of the courses needed to earn a doctorate degree in Counselor Education and Supervision at a CACREP accredited university, the primary investigator has also graduated from a school counseling master's program at a CACREP accredited university. Finally, the researcher's seven years of teaching experience in one of the largest public-school districts in the nation is also a characteristic worth noting as the researcher often collaborated with school counselors and inquired about their methods of college and career readiness and use of the ASCA National Model. Although the researcher can recall seeing a copy of ASCA National Model in each of the school counselor's office he has worked with, he has never worked with a school counselor who has used ASCA's MBSS to promote college and career readiness.

In relation to qualitative research, it is necessary for the researcher to account for bias to promote the idea of trustworthiness (Creswell, 2014). The primary researcher acknowledges that he possesses characteristics that have influenced his core beliefs relating to school counselor educators experience addressing college and career readiness and the ASCA National in school counseling graduate programs. Based on his experience, school counselor educators do not adequately address how school counselors can effectively assist their future students in becoming college and career ready and typically do not introduce their students to ASCA's MBSS. All

researcher characteristics aforementioned will be bracketed as the researcher engages in reflexive journaling.

Despite the vast amount of research which views the school counselor's role as pivotal in addressing college and career readiness with students as well as the research which supports the creation of ASCA's MBSS resource, the researcher's personal experience supports the overwhelming amount of research which identifies a lack of training related to college and career readiness as a reason many school counselors feel inadequate to address the topic with K-12 students. As a student of two CACREP accredited counseling graduate programs, the researcher strongly feels that he would have benefitted if his courses better addressed the school counselor's role in helping students become college and career ready. As a professor and supervisor for school counseling graduate students, the researcher has become much more conscience of preparing his students in addressing college and career readiness with their future students and the ASCA National Model.

Because the researcher's biases described above has ultimately influenced his core beliefs relating to the role of the school counselor educator in ensuring future school counselors are prepared to address college and career readiness with students, he will consistently engage in reflexive journaling of all experiences and feelings related to data collection and analysis as well as implement a diverse and competent research team which will help ensure the trustworthiness of this study.

Research Team

A diverse research team of two professional researchers who have completed a qualitative research course at a CACREP accredited university and have completed a CACREP accredited master's counseling program were recruited to assist the lead researcher with data

analysis. Similar to the primary researcher, all research team members bracketed their biases throughout data analysis. While the role of the primary researcher of this study was to conduct all twelve interviews and lead the focus groups, send recordings to a transcription service, and instruct the research team on Braun and Clarke's (2006) six phases of a thematic analysis – the other team members were responsible for individually familiarizing themselves with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing potential themes, and defining and naming themes. By establishing a diverse research team to generate patterns and themes from semi-structured interviews and the focus groups, the primary researcher will be able to enhance the trustworthiness of the results.

The research team met five times over the course of data analysis to discuss the data in-depth and check for potential biases related to the study (Goodman-Scott & Grothaus, 2017). After analyzing the second transcript, team members met to ensure that the coding process was uniform. They also met after coding their 7th transcript and finally after their last. Multiple codebooks were developed to serve as a reference guide as the team became entrenched in considerable amounts of data (Hays & Singh, 2012). A codebook was developed during each team meeting to allow the primary researcher to create a final codebook. All codebooks included the codes, sub-codes and themes that team members identified throughout the course of data analysis. The research team engaged in the process of constant comparison through the use of previously constructed codes in order to create future codes. Presenting themes were included in the final codebook based on consensus coding which required all team members to agree on a code (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

The first research team member identifies as an African American female and is a Licensed Professional Counselor (also NCC and CCMHC). She is currently an Assistant

Professor of Counseling at a CACREP accredited University. The second team member identifies as a white female and is currently an Assistant Professor in the Human Services department at a University. Both research members graduated with their PhD degrees in Counselor Education and Supervision from a CACREP accredited University in 2019 and neither have experience as school counselors nor teaching school counseling courses. The primary researcher selected these team members as they recently successfully completed all research courses and requirements of a CACREP accredited PhD program. Also, because neither team member has experience as a school counselor or teaching school counseling courses, the primary researcher recognizes that they will be able to offer a unique perspective that can potentially add to the researcher's insight throughout the study.

External Auditor

In addition to utilizing a research team to account for bias, an external auditor was used to enhance the rigor of the study. An external auditor selection was based on the following criteria: having a Ph.D. in Counselor Education, having knowledge of qualitative research, and experience as a school counselor. The external auditor for this study identifies as an African American male in his twenties and is a counselor educator in school counseling at a CACREP accredited university. Previously, he was a school counselor for three years in both public and private school settings. He earned his Ph.D. in Counselor Education and Supervision from a CACREP-Accredited university in 2020 and has experience teaching school counseling courses. In total, four individuals who have qualitative research experience in the area of counselor education were part of this research team to ensure accurate coding and maximum trustworthiness.

Research Plan

After gaining Institutional Review Board approval, the primary researcher selected a sample of twelve school counselor educators and five high school counselors who have taught in or attended a CACREP program within the past five years. This sample size of twelve school counselor educators fits Creswell's (2014) recommendation of approximately ten interviews of individuals and the sample size of five high school professionals fits Hays & Singh's (2012) recommendation of approximately six individuals who have experienced a particular phenomenon.

Data Collection Procedures

Potential participants were e-mailed a letter of invitation (see Appendix A) which described the purpose of the study, criteria for participation, and the incentives for participating. Participants who expressed an interest in being a part of the study and met the criteria were then asked to sign an informed consent form (see Appendix B). Participants were then asked to complete a demographic sheet (see Appendix C and D) and asked to share potential dates and times they would be available to meet via zoom.

Once meeting dates were confirmed, data was collected through zoom technology. Interviews lasted between 20 – 43 minutes, with the average interview lasting 27 minutes which allowed participants to provide in depth responses to each question (Hays & Singh, 2012). The two focus groups lasted 1:04 and 55 minutes respectively with the average focus group being one hour. Each interview and focus group began with a summary of the research study and the opportunity for participants to confirm that they were still interested in participating.

The semi-structured interview and focus group protocol each consisted of 11 questions that allowed participants to add additional thoughts about the topic that was not already asked (see Appendix E and F). Although the semi-structured protocol served as a guide, it allowed for

flexibility depending on participant responses (Hays & Singh, 2012). Throughout data collection, the primary researcher took notes and recorded the session so he would be able to transcribe the data and refer to as necessary (Hays & Singh, 2012).

Within two weeks of the final interview, each participant was emailed a copy of their transcription and invited to provide feedback, clarification, or corrections to their transcript (see Appendix G). Although all 17 participants were invited to engage in member-checking, only nine participants responded to provide clarification of inaudible words and additions to original transcripts. The researcher then made the updates to each transcript and sent the research team all completed transcripts after providing participants with two-weeks to engage in member-checking.

Participants and Sampling Method

The researcher initially engaged in a convenience sampling method to recruit potential participants via CESNET and a counselor educator excel list provided by a colleague. Each participant was e-mailed the interview protocol 48 hours before the scheduled interview. Twelve school counselor educators from across the United States who are currently instructing a school counseling orientation, practicum, or internship course at a CACREP accredited college or university were identified to participate in a semi-structured interview conducted via zoom and lasted approximately 45 minutes. In addition to the interviews, four high school counselors who have completed a CACREP accredited school counseling program as well as one college and career readiness counselor participated in an hour-long focus group via zoom. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed by a transcription service.

Storage of Data

Engaging in ethical and professional research practices involves ensuring confidentiality of each participant. Researchers have recommended planning to safely store research at the beginning of data collection (Corti, 2008). The primary researcher of this study protected participants' confidentiality by keeping all data collected in a password protected electronic file stored in the researcher's home as suggested by Creswell (2014). All transcripts were de-identified before being presented to the research team for coding. Participants will be identified by numbers during data analysis and the coding process. All research data and identifying information will be destroyed within seven years of the completion of the project.

Interview Protocol

Consistent with the recommendations of Creswell (2014) and Kvale & Brinkmann (2009), the researcher designed an interview protocol consisting of approximately ten open-ended questions for both the individual interviews as well as the focus group. Specific to this study, the interview protocol (Appendix D), gauges school counselor educators' experiences addressing the school counselors' role in helping students become college and career ready, familiarity and opinion of ASCA's MBSS, familiarity of other strategies, actions, tools, and resources that are used to address college and career readiness concerns with students, and inquires how well CACREP accredited school counselor programs are preparing future school counselors to address the topic of college and career readiness with students.

Demographic Questionnaire

A one-page questionnaire was used to collect demographic information from those who were willing to participate in this study. The demographic form that was specific to school counselor educators (Appendix C) was used to ensure participants have instructed a school counseling orientation, practicum, or internship course at a CACREP accredited university

within the past five years, inquire which state the CACREP program they've taught that course in, and the total amount of years they have been a school counselor educator in a CACREP program. Similarly, the five high school professionals who were willing to participate in the focus group also completed a one-page questionnaire. This questionnaire (Appendix D) allowed the school counseling professionals to share whether or not they have graduated from a CACREP accredited school counseling master's program within the past five years, the total amount of years each participant has been a school counselor in the school they are working in, the total amount of years they have been a school counselor in their state, and an option to check whether their school can be described as "urban/city", "suburban", or "rural". Both demographic sheets will require participants to identify their age, gender, race/ethnicity, highest level of education completed, and the state their school is located in. Aside from attempting to control the inclusion of both genders and making sure the sample of participants represent school counselor educators and school counselors from across the nation, participants were chosen at random. Participants will also be assured that their responses (including demographics) will remain completely anonymous.

Interviews

Twelve school counselor educators from CACREP accredited universities participated in an individual interview to describe personal experiences (Hays & Singh, 2012). Consistent with the recommendations of Hays & Singh (2012), the interviews of this study lasted between 23 minutes and one hour and were recorded and transcribed. Because the researcher was interested in gathering data across the United States, distance interviews were conducted via Zoom after participant consent. Individual interviews were semi-structured, in-depth, and included open-ended questions. Researchers (Christensen & Brumfield, 2010) have supported the use of semi

structured interviews in counseling research and other researchers (Goodman-Scott, Carlisle, Clark, & Burgess, 2016; Grimes, Haskins, & Paisley, 2013; Roe, 2013) have used a semi-structured interview method while conducting research in school counseling.

Focus Groups

In an effort to enhance the trustworthiness of this study, the researcher engaged in *triangulation of data sources* (Hays & Singh, 2012) by conducting two focus groups consisting of five high school counseling professionals. Although all five members were scheduled to attend the original focus group session, two of them needed to schedule so a follow-up focus group was necessary. Upon the completion of interviewing twelve school counselor educators, the primary researcher facilitated two focus groups that lasted approximately one hour and were held via Zoom.

A sample size of five participants aligns with researcher's (Hays & Singh, 2012) recommendation that focus groups should include approximately 6-12 individuals as the facilitator should take into account that a low number of participants may put too much pressure on some individuals, whereas too many participants increases the likelihood of distractions and side conversations. Potential school counselor participants of this study were asked to respond to Focus Group Protocol questions (Appendix F), which asked them to identify their experience and role in helping students become college and career ready, familiarity and opinion of ASCA's MBSS, as well as to list other strategies, actions, tools, or resources that are used in their school counseling department to help students address the topic of college and career readiness.

According to Kress and Shoffner (2007), focus groups have become a popular research approach in the area of counseling and other researchers have described focus groups as potentially being a

“catalyst for participant disclosure, connecting with others, and expanding on or challenging perspectives in a synergistic manner” (Hays & Singh, 2012, p.252).

Because the primary purpose of focus groups is to provide participants of a homogenous group an opportunity to discuss a specific topic (Hays & Singh, 2012), the researcher was mindful in ensuring all school counseling professionals have recently graduated from a CACREP accredited school counseling program and have experience addressing the topic college and career readiness with K-12 students. Because focus groups can potentially “accentuate members’ similarities and differences and give rich information about the range of perspectives and experiences” (Lambert & Loiselle, 2008, p.229), the researchers method of triangulating data sources through interviews and a focus group helped provide a clear picture of how college and career readiness counseling is being addressed in school counseling programs.

Paradigm and Philosophies of Science

Because the researcher is interested in understanding how participants conceptualize the research question in addition to learning about the contextual factors that influence how participants and the research team report research findings, the researcher will use a social constructivist paradigm (Hays & Singh, 2012). The belief system of social constructivism assumes there is no “universal truth” as multiple contextual perspectives and subjective voices in the field of counseling exists. Social constructivists argue that data collected relating to counseling phenomena should never be considered as objective since the voices of researchers and participants are biased influenced by various cultural experiences and identifies (Hays & Singh, 2012). Within the social constructivism paradigm, Denzin and Lincoln (2003) identify four philosophies of science qualitative researchers undertake which reflect a set of beliefs

related to the researcher's *ontology*, *epistemology*, *axiology*, and *methodology* assumptions and experiences (Hays & Wood, 2011).

Ontology which refers to the “nature of reality” is represented by participant's worldviews (Creswell, 2014), was addressed in this study through school counselor educators' experience, perceptions, and views of addressing ASCA's MBSS and college and career readiness in school counseling master's programs. Epistemology, refers to the process of knowing and focuses on the relationship between the researcher and the research participants (Hays & Singh, 2012). Epistemologically, the social constructivist approach used in this study will explore school counselor educators' subjective reality of their role of addressing college and career readiness with future school counselors. The researcher hopes to provide participants a voice within the context of this study by presenting collected data in terms of narrative experiences. The third philosophical assumption – axiology – refers to the ethics, morals, and values of the researcher (Creswell, 2014) and aligns with the researcher's acknowledgement of the importance of engaging in professional research practice while respecting every participant, their experiences, and the field of school counseling and school counseling education. The final philosophy of science, methodology, refers to the researcher's responsibility of planning to engage in the most effective strategies for collecting data (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). After careful consideration of how to gain the best understanding of how school counselor educators' experience addressing college and career readiness and the MBSS (ASCA, 2014) with school counseling orientation, practicum, and internship school counseling students, a qualitative research design was carried out via a thematic analysis.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness, which has been described as validity, rigor, and credibility (Hunt, 2011), challenges the researcher to account for potential biases. A primary method of increasing the trustworthiness of this study already discussed was the implementation of a qualified research team and external auditor. The implementation of a qualified team allowed the researcher to account for personal bias and support generating themes. Additionally, all members of the research team diligently engaged in reflexive journaling throughout data collection in order to bracket any emotional reactions experienced as they examine how their own worldview and biases may have influenced the research project (Creswell, 2014; Dowling, 2008; Hays & Singh, 2012). Furthermore, Creswell (2014) specifically recommends that qualitative researchers reflect their own experiences and worldviews by journaling about their own cultural values, attitudes, and assumptions surrounding the topic. Other validation strategies that were used to maximize the trustworthiness of this study includes allowing participants to engage in member checking completed transcriptions for errors and additions (Creswell 2014; Hays & Singh, 2012; Lincoln & Guba 1985), triangulation between school counselor educators and school counselors (Lincoln & Guba 1985), thick description to provide contextual detail in interpreting social meaning of the data (Creswell 2014; Hays & Singh, 2012) and peer debriefing as the primary researcher was the only member of the research team with a school counseling background (Creswell 2014; Hays & Singh, 2012). To further manage personal bias as much as possible, the primary researcher utilized four verification procedures to increase trustworthiness as outlined by Hays and Singh (2012): credibility, confirmability, transferability, and dependability.

Credibility

A primary criterion of trustworthiness in this study involves the *credibility* of it which has been described as the “believability” of the research findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Moreover,

credibility has been identified as one of the major criteria qualitative researchers use to determine if the data collected and analyzed makes sense (Hays & Singh, 2012). Therefore, the researcher of this study used multiple strategies to enhance the credibility of the data collected and analyzed. In order to ensure the researcher's interpretations of the realities are credible, the following strategies were used: member checking, triangulation, thick description, and peer debriefing.

A key strategy for establishing trustworthiness, member checking (Lincoln & Guba 1985), involves including the participants in the research process in order to accurately portray their intended thoughts and meanings (Hays & Singh, 2012). The researcher of this study provided all participants with interview transcripts and completed data analysis in order to ensure the accuracy of the data collected by encouraging participants to clarify or change any data as suggested by Morse (2015). Data collected via member checking was coded the same way as the initial interviews.

Triangulation is another strategy that was used to ensure the trustworthiness of data collection in this study which involves multiple types of evidence to better support and describe findings (Hays & Singh, 2012). The first form of triangulation that was used in this study was *triangulation of data sources* explained by Hays & Singh, (2012) which was addressed with the addition of the focus groups of school counseling professionals. By conducting focus groups consisting of school counselors after interviewing school counselor educators, the research team was able to compare the findings of both sets of data. Another form of triangulation, *triangulation of investigators*, (Hays & Singh, 2012), was utilized as the researcher developed a competent research team of three other experienced researchers to help identify themes and patterns.

Confirmability

Confirmability refers to the degree to which the findings of a study are accurate reflections of participant responses (Hays & Singh, 2012). Confirmability is aligned to the degree of which interference from the researcher was prevented (Hays & Singh, 2012). To ensure confirmability, the researcher engaged in reflexive journaling, employed triangulation of sources and triangulation of investigators, and maintained an audit trail throughout the study as recommended by Morse (2015).

Transferability

Transferability has been compared to external validity in quantitative research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), and provides in depth details about the generalizability of the research findings. The transferability of a study reflects the extent of how well findings can be applied to other situations. Although generalizability is not the goal of qualitative research (Hays & Singh, 2012), researchers are encouraged to provide readers with enough details of the research process and participants so that the reader can make their own decisions about the degree to which any findings are applicable (Hays & Singh, 2012). Therefore, the research team engaged in thick description by paying close attention to detail while generating codes and themes in order to provide in depth details about the generalizability of the research findings as recommended by (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Dependability

Similar to ‘reliability’ in quantitative research, dependability has been described as “the consistency of study results over time and across researchers” (Hays & Singh, 2012, p. 201). In other words, if a similar study were to be conducted in various settings, the findings would be the same (Morse, 2015). To achieve this criteria, the researcher engaged in the use of an external

auditor, triangulation, and maintain an audit trail to enhance the dependability of this research study (Hays & Singh, 2012; Morse, 2015).

In summary, reflexive journaling to bracket researcher bias, the development of a diverse research team, member checking, triangulation, thick description, and peer debriefing are the strategies used to maximize the trustworthiness of this dissertation. These strategies assisted the researcher in strengthening the credibility, confirmability, transferability, and dependability, which ensured a scientifically rigorous study.

Summary

This qualitative study used a thematic analysis method to examine how school counseling professionals experience addressing college and career readiness and ASCA's *Mindsets & Behaviors for Student Success: K-12 College and Career Readiness Standards for Every Student* (ASCA, 2014) in school counseling programs. The research team was able to implement the guidelines of Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework of analyzing a thematic analysis compiled from the data collected from the interviews and focus groups. Twelve school counselor educators participated in individual semi-structured interviews and five high school counseling professionals participated in focus groups.

To account for researcher bias, the researcher thoroughly engaged in reflexive journaling (bracketing), assembled a diverse research team to assist in coding, as well as implemented other strategies such as: member checking, triangulation, thick description, and peer debriefing to maximize the trustworthiness of this dissertation study. It is hoped that through the development and implantation of a thoroughly researched, carefully planned, and extensively executed research study – the insight that was gained relating to school counseling professionals' experiences addressing college and career readiness and ASCA's MBSS in school counseling

graduate and K-12 programs will provide the field with useful recommendations of how school counselor education programs can better prepare school counselors to engage in college and career readiness counseling with K-12 students.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH FINDINGS

This chapter summarizes the qualitative findings related to the research questions: “What are school counseling professionals’ experiences addressing college and career readiness?” and “What are school counseling professionals’ experiences addressing ASCA’s MBSS in CACREP accredited school counseling programs?” The narrative overviews of the data collection process and data analysis method conducted by the research team will also be addressed in this section. Next, the participant demographic characteristics are explained. Fourth, the agreed-upon themes and sub-themes are discussed, including specific participant quotes to support each theme. Finally, this chapter will conclude with a summary that supports the final consensus codebook.

Review of Data Collection and Analysis

In an attempt to better understand how school counseling educators currently experience their role in introducing school counselors-in-training to college and career readiness strategies such as ASCA’s MBSS resource, the primary researcher interviewed 12 school counselor educators of CACREP accredited programs. Furthermore, the primary researcher facilitated two focus groups which provided five school counselors with an opportunity to share personal experiences and discuss topics related to the research questions. Participants were asked ten questions (see Appendix E and F) and were also given the opportunity to share anything else about the topic that was not specifically asked. All interviews and focus groups were recorded via Zoom and forwarded to a transcription service. Once the completed transcriptions were returned to the primary researcher; he emailed each participant a copy of their transcription along with a copy of the interview protocol and encouraged them to review the document and make any corrections or clarifications that would strengthen the reliability of the results.

After collecting the data and providing each participant with two weeks to engage in member-checking, the three members of the research team participated in the first of five team meetings. During the first research team meeting, the primary researcher was able to review the research questions, introduce Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step approach to a thematic analysis as the method that was used to analyze the data of this study, and scheduled a follow-up research team meeting. Although Braun and Clarke (2006) recommended using a thematic map for initial data analysis, this procedure was not included given the direction of the research team. Instead the research team met five times to discuss themes and keep each other accountable for bracketing biases. During the first team meeting, the research team agreed to meet and discuss thoughts and themes after coding the second, seventh, and twelfth interview. The research team met one final time to review the final codebook.

Members of the research team were successfully able to adhere to Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step approach to a thematic analysis as we *became familiar with the data* through our initial first reading of the transcriptions. After familiarizing ourselves with the data, we were able to *generate initial codes* which were identified during team meetings. After generating initial codes, we were then able to *search for themes* and *review those themes* during team meetings. The fifth phase, *defining and naming themes* was discussed during the third team meeting and revisited and agreed upon after the final two team meetings.

Participation Demographics

The primary researcher sent out an invitation to participate in this study through the CESNET listserv to successfully recruit participants to ensure a diverse sample of school counseling professionals from across the nation. Although demographic forms (See Appendix C and D) required participants to identify the specific college or university that they have taught in

or graduated from, the purpose of this question was to ensure that no school counseling program was represented more than once. To protect the identity of each participant, the researcher opted to only display the state that was represented by each participant in (Table 1.1). To further protect the identity of all participants, demographic characteristics as well as participant quotes will be presented as “SCE 1” – “SCE 12” (to reflect the 12 school counselor educators) and “SC 1” – “SC 5” (school counselors who participated in the focus groups).

Interview Participants

Twelve school counselor educators who have instructed a school counseling orientation, practicum, or internship course at a CACREP accredited counseling program were provided an informed consent form to sign and subsequently asked to share their experiences related to the research topic. Ten out of the 12 participants interviewed indicated that they identify as female and two identify as male. The average years of participant experience shared among school counselor educators was ($N = 7.5$). Furthermore, the age of the 11 participants who agreed to share their age ranged from 38 – 62 ($M = 49$). Most of the SCEs who participated in this study identified as White/Caucasian ($n = 7$), followed by Black/African American ($n = 3$), and lastly Asian/Indian ($n = 2$). When asked to share the highest level of education that they completed, most of the SCEs indicated being PhD graduates ($n = 10$) followed by EdDs ($n = 2$).

Also, because the research questions specifically address school counseling professionals’ experiences surrounding the ASCA National Model and their MBSS resource, the primary researcher found it beneficial to inquire about participants’ membership status. Eight of the SCEs are currently ASCA members, two have never been members, and two reported being former members of ASCA. The total number of years of ASCA membership among all 12 participants was ($N = 131$) and the average number of years of ASCA membership was ($M = 11$).

In addition to requesting the potential interview participants complete a demographic form, school counselors who expressed interest in participating in a focus group were also asked to share relevant demographic information.

Focus Group Members

Four high school counselors who have recently graduated from a CACREP accredited program and one College and Career Resource Counselor/Consultant (CCRCC) participated in one of two focus groups and were encouraged to share personal experiences related to the research topic. All group members were women who currently hold a master's degree in school counseling. The school counselors who participated in this study indicated to have graduated CACREP accredited school counseling programs in 2019, 2018, 2017, and 2013. Additionally, the CCRCC indicated that the 20 years of school counseling experience she had before accepting her current position as a college and career readiness resource counselor and consultant has provided her with essential experiences of how she can best help school counselors, students, and programs. The CCRC described her responsibilities as: training college and career readiness counselors, conducting site visits, coordinating college and career readiness programs, and consulting for the topic of college and career at the district office.

Demographic forms were also used to help the primary researcher identify that the average age of focus group participants was ($M = 38$) years old. The average number of years of experience among the high school counselors who participated in this study was ($M = 3.5$) years and the CCRC had 20 years of experience in the field. Three participants identified as White, one identified as Hispanic/White, and one identified as Asian. Furthermore, three of the group members indicated that they are currently working in an Urban/City environment and two members mentioned that they are school counselors in a rural setting. All five group members

reported that they are current ASCA members with the average years of ASCA membership being 3.6 years.

Demographic Tables

Table 1.1

School Counselor Educator Backgrounds

Pseudonym	State	Years as a SCE	ASCA Member	Age	Gender	Race	Education
SCE 1	IN	15	Y	62	F	Caucasian	Ed.D
SCE 2	MS	4	Y	40	F	Caucasian	PhD.
SCE 3	WI	22	N	57	F	Caucasian	Ed.D
SCE 4	FL	7	N	38	F	Asian/Indian	PhD.
SCE 5	LA	2.5	N	39	F	Black/African American	PhD.
SCE 6	MI	1.5	Y	N/A	F	Black/African American	PhD.
SCE 7	VA	1	Y	54	M	Caucasian	PhD.
SCE 8	AL	4.5	Y	42	F	Asian/Indian	PhD.
SCE 9	VA	15	Y	60	M	Caucasian	PhD.
SCE 10	LA	12	N	47	F	Caucasian	PhD.
SCE 11	OH	1	Y	39	F	Caucasian	PhD.
SCE 12	NC	5.5	Y	62	F	Black/African American	PhD

Table 1.2

School Counselor Backgrounds

Pseudonym	State	Years as	ASCA	Age	Gender	Race	Area
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a SC Member							
SC 1	KS	2	Y	33	F	White	Urban/City
SC 2	PA	2	Y	42	F	Caucasian	Rural
SC 3	MI	3	Y	25	F	Asian	Urban/City
SC 4	NM	7	Y	53	F	Hispanic/White	Urban
SC 5	NM	20	Y	35	F	White	Rural

Note. All school counseling participants have earned Master's Degrees for CACREP programs.

Themes

During the data analysis phase, the research team identified five overarching themes, each with between three and six subthemes. Each of the five themes is based on the findings of the school counselor educators who participated in this study and subsequently supported by the data that was collected during the focus groups. The overarching themes that were identified by the research team includes: *conceptualizing college and career readiness, challenges of addressing College and Career Readiness in school counseling programs, multicultural influences, ASCA's MBSS in practice, and challenges with ASCA and the MBSS.*

List of Themes and Subthemes

1. Conceptualizing College and Career Readiness

- 1.1 Defining College and Career Readiness
- 1.2 College and Career Readiness at the Elementary Level
- 1.3 College is Not for Everyone
- 1.4 The Financial Burden of College
- 1.5 Military Being an Option
- 1.6 School Counselor Experiences and Recommendations

2. Challenges Addressing CCR in School Counseling Graduate Programs

- 2.1 Programs Not Specific to School Counseling
- 2.2 Being the Only Faculty Member in the Department
- 2.3 College and Career Readiness is Constantly Evolving

3. Multicultural Influences

- 3.1 Being Aware of Biases

- 3.2 Providing Students with Diverse Experiences
- 3.3 First-Generation College Students
- 3.4 College and Career Readiness Specific to Ethnicity
- 3.5 Socioeconomic Status
- 3.6 Meeting the Needs of All Students

4. ASCA's MBSS in Practice

- 4.1 Understanding ASCA's MBSS
- 4.2 Motivation to Use ASCA's MBSS
- 4.3 Appreciation for the Updated Standards
- 4.4 How ASCA's MBSS are Used
- 4.5 Recommendations for ASCA

5. Challenges with ASCA and the MBSS

- 5.1 Lack of Time
- 5.2 Lack of Buy-in
- 5.3 Lack of Training
- 5.4 Lack of Understanding

Theme One: Conceptualizing College and Career Readiness

Interviews began by inviting participants to define college and career readiness, and multiple follow-up questions prompted participants to think about their role in addressing college and career readiness in their school counseling programs. Subsequently, the research team identified the following six subthemes that were related to college and career readiness in the school counseling profession: defining college and career readiness, college and career readiness at the elementary level, college is not for everyone, the financial burden of college, the military being an option, and school counselor's experiences and recommendations.

1.1. Defining College and Career Readiness

By asking participants to define college and career readiness at the start of each interview and focus group, the research team was able to gain a general idea of how current school counseling professionals understand college and career readiness in the school counseling profession. The following definitions of *college and career readiness in the school counseling*

profession were provided by experienced school counselor educators from CACREP accredited programs and reflect the commonalities among participants.

SCE 10 defined college and career readiness in the school counseling profession as:

Providing, the resources that student's need in order to be ready for either the world of work, or the world of college, whatever they choose to be, whatever they choose to pursue.

SCE 11 defined college and career readiness as:

A set of competencies and skills and mindsets that a student would have in order to be ready to enter the workforce or enter post-secondary careers.

SCE 3:

It's all of those knowledge, skills, and awarenesses that allow students to succeed not only in school, but in terms of developing as better people and citizens. Then that moves them into the careers and vocations and post-secondary options that they want.

SCE 12:

College and Career Readiness encompasses all students when we think about our preparation of them. Giving them all of the options.

After having the opportunity to provide a personal definition of college and career readiness in the school counseling profession, participants were asked to describe their role in addressing college and career readiness as well as provide personal insight on how it is addressed in K-12 school counseling programs. This prompted a few participants to identify the importance of school counselors addressing college and career readiness at the elementary level.

1.2. College and Career Readiness at the Elementary Level

During data collection, four school counseling professionals shared the belief that elementary-aged students are often over-looked when it comes to planning for life after high school. SCE 6 promoted the idea of elementary school counselors exposing their students to career readiness discussions and went as far as to share personal experiences of observing school counselors-in-training attempting to identify careers that match each students' interests. Similarly, SCE 12 expressed the idea of creatively incorporating career readiness into elementary school counseling programs and discussed the idea of communicating with school counselors in-training about how they will be able to work with future students and the importance of teaching skills and providing resources that can expose them to a wide variety of career options.

During one of the focus groups, SC 1 shared that as a current school counselor who occasionally works with kindergarten students, she makes it a point to address college and career readiness through implementing various activities in her school counseling program. Furthermore, SC 4 identified the importance of "talking about different jobs" and added "that's something that I would have loved to experience" in their school counseling program. To support the belief that college and career readiness interventions should start as early as the elementary level, multiple participants discussed how school counseling professionals are in a position to introduce their students to post-secondary opportunities that go beyond college preparation.

1.3. College is Not for Everyone

Eleven out of the twelve school counselor educators interviewed discussed specific reasons why putting so much pressure on the college application and admissions process is not in the best interest of every student. By acknowledging that college and career readiness encompasses more than 'just college', multiple participants made note of the reality that many students do not possess the intellectual abilities that is required to be successful in college.

Furthermore, participants expressed the idea that many students are not in a position to afford a typical four-year college experience and also the reality that many students are interested in the military. Participants of this study discussed how the ‘career’ piece of college and career readiness is often overlooked by many school counseling professionals who prioritize helping students get accepted to college. SC 5 mentioned that “career is just as important as college,” and SCE 7 shared that their biggest emphasis regarding career-readiness is that:

There is obviously a major focus on the college and universities. But that doesn’t necessarily mean that’s the only answer. And I have really cautioned my students that the need to be able to introduce to their future student clients both the military and trade and vocation schools. We need to be able to guide them to whatever best suits them, not what best suits us.

Similarly, SCE 1 declared:

Actually, we put career first because we think career is more important than college. As we teach our students, it’s important across the P-12 curriculum. And so, we encourage them to think about that in terms of not just high school or seniors going off to college but thinking about it from little kids on and up. It encompasses both career and college.

To further support the idea that school counselors are not only responsible for preparing students to enroll in traditional four-year college, multiple participants addressed the reality that many students do not possess the intellectual abilities needed to be successful in college. Three school counselor educators and one school counselor discussed the importance of school counselors being prepared to provide students with various post-secondary options such as trade schools and the military. For example, SCE 6 stated, “We’ve got a lot of kids who may not necessarily see

themselves in a two-year college or a four-year college, and so it's about the counselor informing students." Similarly, SC 5 mentioned that the way school counselors talk to students and the information they are able to provide to them is critically important because in today's world, "not every student needs to go to a four-year college and incur huge debt when there are so many pathways."

Participants SCE 1 and SCE 7 were also able to share personal experiences of how college is often not the best option for every student. SCE 1 discussed being married to a math teacher who "loves to teach math" and went on to explain that although their spouse:

Would love if every kid got it, there are kids who are never going to get it.

And so why are we push, push, pushing them to take these really difficult
classes, taking the joy out of their lives when they're not going to need it.

In the same way, SCE 7 shared a personal experience of being a director of a school counseling program and overhearing another faculty member discouraging students from enrolling in an automotive program. This participant went on to share their experience of having a conversation with that faculty member and saying: "Look. This is your personal bias. You think everybody should go to college. I think a college education's very important. But I also believe college is not for everybody." In addition to providing reasons such as student abilities and interests as potential reasons of why many students are not best served to enroll in a four-year college or university, participants of this study also identified the financial barrier associated with embarking on the traditional college experience.

1.4. The Financial Burden of College

Four school counselor educators discussed their views relating to how the financial burden of college is something school counseling professionals must be ready to address when

working with high school students. The idea of the financial aspect of college creating a barrier for many students was also discussed during both focus groups. From a school counselor's perspective, SC 3 reported "Our kids are very aware how much school costs. And they are not interested in taking out the kinds of student loans that when I was in college people didn't even question to take out student loans." To address how school counselor educators experience discussing the financial component of college, SCE 1 stated:

I know there was a time in which they were really pushing everyone to go to college, and now we realize, 'Please don't have them soak up a lot of expense if they're not fit for college, or that they want to do something else.' You know?... It's so outrageously expensive.

Similarly, SCE 9 passionately shared:

Federal funding has been slashed. Student-loan debt is considerable. It's much higher than it used to be. Newer generations, especially the millennials, are not making as much. They're graduating with more debt and the likelihood of them doing better financially than their parents' generation is not as guaranteed as it was in the past, so the landscape has shifted. I think there was always some concern about pushing everybody to go to college.

In the same way, SCE 2 explained how many students attempt to "shoot for the stars" when applying to traditional four-year colleges and universities and added "When it comes down to it, it's financially more appropriate for them to start at a community college and build up to that university of their dreams."

In addition to identifying the reality that the cost of college will create barriers for many students, three participants discussed alternative educational opportunities that do not require

students to pay steep tuition fees. SCE 11 noted that she makes sure to instruct her school counseling students to “know all about different kinds of colleges” and challenges them “to know the difference between a community college and a four-year college.” SCE 2 shared an appreciation for Mississippi’s 13 community colleges and added that each has off campus centers. In addition to recommending community colleges to students who are unwilling to enroll in expensive schools, participants of this study also identified the opportunity students have to enlist in the military as a common post-secondary option.

1.5. Military Being an Option

After coding the data, the research team agreed that the option of enlisting in the military was a suitable subtheme of college and career readiness. SCE 6 highlighted how school counselors are in a position to promote enlisting in the military to high school students. SCE 8 provided a specific example of working with a student who displays a lack of interest in core classes but is interested in joining the armed forces. This participant went on to explain how the school counselor and student can benefit from exploring ROTC programs resulting in the school counselor being able to link the student’s current academic struggles with their military interests by suggesting, “Hey, if you want to go to military, that’s awesome, but you need to graduate high school. And here’s why you need to do math, because in military you’re going to need to do math, you’re going to need to read.”

SCE 7 also addressed how school counselors are in the position to support students who are considering enlisting in the military through a personal experience of working in a district that seemed to be “against the military” and suggested:

Well, but that’s not their point to say that. Whether I liked the military or not, I shouldn’t be taking opportunities away from students. So, I tell them, in short,

they need to open doors for students. The only way to open doors is to explain to them different opportunities of all different segments of possibilities.

After analyzing the data and developing themes related to school counselor educators' experiences addressing the topic of college and career readiness in their school counseling graduate program, the research team agreed to dedicate the following sub-theme to current school counselors' experiences addressing college and career readiness concerns with their high school students.

1.6. School Counselor Experiences and Recommendations

Four high school counselors and one college and career readiness counselor participated in one of two focus groups and were asked to share their experience of addressing college and career readiness with high school students. SC 3 discussed how their school counseling program is designed to encourage all students to follow a college-bound curriculum. SC 2 revealed their high school has implemented a specific course to seniors who are interested in learning more about the college application process. In addition to discussing specific ways their school counseling program addresses college and career readiness issues with students, participants of both focus groups were also able to discuss how the topic was addressed in their CACREP accredited school counseling graduate program and generated a wide-range of responses.

In discussing how college and career readiness was addressed in their CACREP accredited school counseling programs, focus group participants had a wide range of responses. SC 3 mentioned that "College and career readiness really was not a huge part of our curriculum" and SC 1 stated "In my program, we had one course on career development" but indicated that this course was focused on the theoretical and historical aspects of the topic of college and career

readiness rather than specific strategies of how they can help future students. Conversely, SC 4 shared:

The school counseling class was great. I appreciated that because [my professor] made us do our mission statement. She made us really think about ASCA-driven school counseling programs. And I felt more prepared than other students coming from our main flagship university.

Additionally, SC 2 shared an appreciation of learning how to use ASCA's resources such as the Conversation Starters during their CACREP accredited school counseling program. In addition to sharing specific experiences of how college and career readiness was addressed in their school counseling programs, focus group participants also identified common barriers they have faced while addressing college and career readiness concerns with K-12 students.

All five focus group participants addressed specific barriers they have encountered in their quest of ensuring all students are college and career ready. SC 3 and SC 4 shared that communicating with students can sometimes be difficult as many teachers are often hesitant to let them into their classroom. Similarly, SC 1 and SC 3 discussed the challenge of communicating with students who "don't check their e-mail." The disconnect and confusion that is often experienced among school counseling professionals regarding their roles within school counseling was presented by SC 1 who stated:

I mean some schools are saying 'we're going to have a counselor that's kind of just our college group person and then we're maybe going to have a counselor that's kind of dedicated to social and emotional concerns' and I think if schools had resources that they could kind of have those positions kind of separated out.

In addition to declaring communication and the confusion of too many professionals attempting to address a student's college and career readiness concerns as potential barriers, focus group participants also identified additional obstacles related to best practices in preparing students for life after high school. SC 2 called attention to low attendance rates and discussed the lack of student buy-in specific to state mandated college and career readiness programs as potential barriers school counselors encounter when helping students plan for their future. SC 2 offered insight of how school counselors often struggle with finding the time to implement a successful college and career readiness program and adds:

I get a lot of emails from the school district and different outside agencies for opportunities for a different college and career readiness... so I know that these opportunities exist, but because of how crazy my day-to-day is, I just wish that I got to take more advantage of them.

Similarly, SC 3 shared:

I don't feel like I can do any of my roles super well. I feel like I'm all over the place. I'm the only school counselor and I'm middle school and high school, and I get pulled to do a lot of administrative tasks... so I never feel like I'm doing enough for college and career readiness. I never feel like I'm giving enough counseling to social-emotional problems. It's just like I can see the potential for being able to do so much more. And it's hard. It's hard sometimes.

In addition to identifying specific challenges of being able to implement a successful college and career readiness program, the school counseling professionals who participated in this study were also able to provide specific recommendations of things

they believe could support school counselors in ensuring all students are prepared for post-secondary success.

During the school counselor focus groups, each group member had specific recommendations of how college and career readiness can be better addressed in schools and counseling programs. SC 4 called for “more training for everybody in the school building” and SC 5 agreed. Furthermore, SC 5 also discussed how “it would be so beneficial for our students if [they] were required to do a job shadow, mentorship, internship, some sort of being out in the workforce so they had a little bit of an idea... I just feel like the industry is telling us that our kids are not employable.”

SC 2 was excited to share her personal experience and appreciation of completing an exit survey of her CACREP accredited school counseling program with a cohort who did not feel prepared to address college and career readiness and indicated:

When we did our exit surveys... [we] all mentioned the college and career readiness piece that we didn't think that we had enough information provided by our school... so our program and the people who run it... actually designed a full college and career readiness course, and the next year, implemented it.

In summary, the research team was able to identify the initial theme of ‘Conceptualizing College and Career Readiness’ that reflected the data that was collected through 12 interviews and two focus groups. Furthermore, six subthemes were developed to support College and Career Readiness in the school counseling profession. The following theme, ‘*challenges addressing CCR in school counseling graduate programs*’ explores common difficulties school counseling educators expressed facing in their attempt to address college and career readiness strategies in school counseling orientation, practicum and internship courses.

Theme Two: Challenges Addressing CCR in School Counseling Programs

In addition to defining college and career readiness and sharing personal experiences regarding how it is addressed in school counseling programs, all participants were asked to identify specific barriers that are presented when addressing college and career readiness in CACREP accredited school counseling programs. When discussing their view of how well CACREP accredited school counseling programs prepare students to address college and career readiness concerns, SCE 7 mentioned “I think a lot of schools don’t prepare them as well as they need to.” Similarly, SC 1 presented a recent CACREP school counseling graduate’s point of view that:

I think there’s honestly a weakness related to the college and career readiness piece.... I know that there been some changes made to the program since I finished, which was just in the last two years. But just speaking directly to my experience during the time that I was in the program, there’s a lot of ways that I think it can grow because it’s not as strong as it needs to be in my opinion.

To support the theme of the various challenges school counselor educators often face while attempting to address college and career readiness in schools, the research team identified three subthemes of specific challenges CACREP school counseling instructors encounter when preparing master’s level school counseling students to address college and career readiness concerns including: *programs not specific to school counseling, being the only faculty member in the department, and college and career readiness is constantly evolving.*

1. Programs Not Specific to School Counseling

One reason school counselor educators have noted to struggle to adequately prepare school counseling students to address the topic of college and career readiness relates to the

reality that many school counseling programs require their students to complete course work alongside classmates and professors from various concentrations of counseling. SCE 8 disclosed being a faculty member of a CACREP accredited program which requires all counseling students to take foundational courses together which results in students inevitably missing out on content specific to school counseling. In addition to acknowledging that many CACREP accredited programs group school counseling students with students and professors who do not have school counseling experience, multiple participants shared that they are the only school counselor educator in their respective department, making it difficult to collaborate with other faculty members in developing a school counseling program.

2. Being the Only Faculty Member in the Department

Beyond requiring many school counseling students to complete their program with students with different backgrounds and interests, two participants shared their reality of being the only faculty member with a school counseling background in the entire counseling department. SCE 2 noted that “there’s five faculty in my department. And the other four are clinical mental health. And I’m the only school counselor/educator in the department.” SCE 8 similarly mentioned, “Currently I’m the only school counseling faculty member.” The implication of a lack of school counseling professionals in a school counseling graduate program not only impacts the experience that is offered to school counseling students, but it also inhibits potential collaboration between professionals that helps educators stay informed and kept accountable on a topic that is constantly evolving.

3. College and Career Readiness is Constantly Evolving

Because the topic of college and career readiness has become a primary responsibility for school counseling professionals, it is constantly being examined by researchers who aim to

develop new models and strategies that can help support school counselors in implementing a successful college and career readiness program. Multiple school counselor educators who participated in this study acknowledged that because college and career readiness models are being updated at such a fast pace, it can become difficult to stay current with the literature. SCE 5 shared that a personal challenge of not being able to adequately address the topic of college and career readiness with graduate students is “because so much has changed over the years it becomes difficult to know exactly what to introduce to them.” Also, as previously mentioned, school counselor educators often find themselves as being the only school counselor educator in a CACREP school counseling program, and two school counselor educators who participated in this study explained how being the only faculty member in their department makes it even more difficult to stay up-to-date in a field that is constantly evolving.

In summary, the theme of the specific challenges school counselor educators have reported to encounter while attempting to infuse college and career readiness strategies within their CACREP accredited school counseling program can significantly hinder their ability to confidently prepare school counselors-in-training to address college and career readiness concerns with K-12 students. High caseloads, a lack of time, and being the only faculty member in the entire counseling department can serve as specific suggestions of potential areas CACREP accredited school counseling programs can focus on in their attempts to evaluate and improve their program. Moreover, the first topic school counseling programs may want to address when preparing future school counselors to support student college and career readiness concerns is to teach them to acknowledge and respect the many multicultural considerations that were shared during the interviews and focus groups.

Theme Three: Multicultural Influences

To bridge the gap between College and Career Readiness and ASCA's MBSS, all participants identified multicultural considerations related to the school counselor's role in ensuring every student is college and career ready. The research team identified six subthemes that represent participant views and quotes related to multicultural considerations in school counseling programs including: *being aware of biases, providing students with diverse experiences, first-generation college students, college and career readiness specific to ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and meeting the needs of all students.*

3.1. Being Aware of Biases

Multiple participants addressed the importance of being self-aware and explained how personal bias can impact those who we are working with. SCE 6 acknowledged that she identifies as Black and remains cognizant that her students are predominantly White as she explained "in terms of college and career-readiness, it's recognizing that different cultures have different ideas of what college is, what aspirations they want for their children in terms of college and careers." SCE 6 went on to explain how their self-awareness can serve as a quality example of the parallel process she hopes her students will adopt once they begin to work with students who look different from them.

SCE 8 also stressed the importance of talking with school counseling students about being able to recognize how their own biases can potentially assume specific paths for students. SCE 8 suggested that as social justice advocates, it is our responsibility to recognize implicit biases and put them to the side as we have conversations with students. This participant went on to challenge all school counseling graduate students to be self-aware when addressing the college and career readiness needs of K-12 students while ensuring bias does not "creep into our lessons, supports, or programming."

SCE 10 explained that school counselors should be prepared to work with K-12 students who believe, “Oh, it’s easier for you to say that because you’ve had these privileges given to you.” This participant went on to discuss multicultural differences in the school counseling profession by reiterating that counseling students should be ready to meet their students where they are while also recognizing that sometimes differences in backgrounds will create barriers between students and school counselors.

The notion that school counselor educators recognize that being aware of personal bias, as well as communicating the importance of their students doing the same can result in a better understanding between school counseling professionals and the students and families they serve. Still another theme that supports the need of respecting each other’s backgrounds that was identified by the research team addresses how school counseling professionals are able to provide students with diverse experiences and opportunities.

3.2. Providing Students with Diverse Experiences

In an effort to adequately prepare school counselors to work with diverse populations, two participants specifically identified their role in ensuring students receive diverse experiences. SCE 3 mentioned that because their university is not very diverse, the “program is intentional in ensuring students receive a diverse practicum/internship experience.” The recommendation of ensuring master’s level school counseling students receive a diverse practicum and internship experience was also discussed during the first focus group in which participants exclaimed a shared appreciation for their school counseling program’s focus on making sure students secure placements with different grade levels or type of school.

SCE 2, who identifies as a Caucasian woman, also addressed how she makes it a point to provide her students with diverse experiences as she explained how one of her regular internship

guest speakers is an African American school counselor. SCE 2 explained in detail how this speaker is “very real with them... and it helps with the connection of the diversity and getting it from the perspective of someone else who’s coming from a different background than myself.” Because SCE 2 was self-aware of their potential biases as well as attempted to provide students with different experiences and perspectives, they may have found themselves in a position to help school counselors-in-training plan for preparing their students for post-secondary success – especially those who are a part of a family with little-to-no college application experience.

3.3. First-Generation College Students

Two school counselor educators specifically addressed the reality that high school counselors need to be ready to help prepare potential first-generation college students. SCE 6 mentioned that school counselors need to be mindful to respect the culture of students who would be first-generation college attendees by exposing both parent and student to the affordability and accessibility of college. Similarly, SCE 12 shared their approach of giving school counselors-in-training role plays which require them to consult with parents who are unfamiliar with the college application process or are not on the same page as students in terms of post-secondary options. During the second focus group, SC 4 shared her personal experience of struggling as a first-generation college student and noted how that has impacted her current efforts in supporting that population of students. In addition to discussing the importance of having a plan when working with potential first-generation college students, several participants of this study also made comments specific to the race of a student which was identified as a subtheme by the research team.

3.4. College and Career Readiness Specific to Ethnicity

Although SCE 5 made it clear that “multiculturalism often gets limited to race and ethnicity and not necessarily on a global scale that encompasses other important differences such as disabilities or spirituality,” there were enough participant comments specific to the implications of the race of a student in addressing college and career readiness, that the research team identified college and career readiness specific to ethnicity as a subtheme of the multiculturalism aspects of college and career readiness.

SC 3, SC 5, and SCE 7 shared personal experiences of working at a high school with predominantly Hispanic populations. One consideration when working with Hispanic students was presented by SCE 7 who explained the importance of having to respect family values and cultures that often emphasize working to support the family over graduating high school or applying for college. Another consideration related to school counselors who work with large Hispanic populations was addressed by SC 5 who explained “the fear with undocumented students wanting to complete lots of paperwork and then not have that funding to help them with college.” The fact that school counselors may find themselves working with students and families who are undocumented citizens presents additional barriers and obstacles in preparing students for life after graduation.

Furthermore, SCE 6 and SCE 7 discussed how school counselors should strive to be multiculturally competent and respectful when working with Asian students. In regards to college and career readiness, SCE 6 described the surrounding area of her university as having a large Asian population who are often “extremely driven” and acknowledged “the high levels of anxiety” many of those students face. SCE 6 went on to express:

One of the things I stress is sensitivity to the cultural background. It's easy for a Westerner to come in and say, 'These parents are putting too much stress on their kids. The children don't want to go to Harvard.'

SCE 7 also addressed working with Asian students who are "very high-level math or engineering, so you want to respect the culture, and you want to respect the parents expectations, but you also want to respect your client's wishes." The shared perception of SCE 6 and SCE 7 related to their role in respecting the cultural values of Asian students who find themselves with high levels of anxiety due to family expectations can offer insight to other school counseling professionals who work with a highly-driven population. Furthermore, the shared professional experiences and opinions surrounding the importance of acknowledging ethnicity in the counseling setting closely resembles the following theme that addresses the school counselor's obligation to also be aware of the socioeconomic background of their student population, and their responsibility to serve that population.

3.5. Socioeconomic Status

The research team also identified Socioeconomic Status as a subtheme of the multicultural influences associated with college and career readiness as several participants addressed how the financial backgrounds of students is a consideration when helping them prepare for life after high school. SCE 11 mentioned that "if you look at those students who are maybe not prepared to apply to college by the beginning of senior year, it's typically the underrepresented students or low-income students." To support SCE 11's theory that high school seniors who come from homes with less money are typically less prepared to apply for college than their peers who are more financially stable, SCE 5 and SCE 11 each highlighted specific

advantages that wealthy students have such as better access to online learning, A.P. courses, and tutoring services.

While discussing the reality of how tuition rates can often present students with difficult decisions that can potentially have a significant impact on their future, SCE 7 shared personal experiences of providing future school counselors with hypothetical case studies such as how they would plan to work with a student who is considering joining his parent's welding company, while also feeling the pressure of applying to colleges and universities. SCE 7 also recommended that school counselors need to be prepared to help students explore career centers that can inform them how to obtain specific certifications that do not result in subjecting them to excessive debt and also suggested that some programs can benefit students because: "they don't have to pay all this money when they get out of school. I think the logic is educating the future school counselors on certification because I didn't know it." The financial barrier that many students face of confidently applying to traditional four-year colleges and universities has presented itself as a reoccurring theme as the participants of this study made it clear that school counselors are expected to support students who are either unsure of what they want to do after graduating high school or are in need of financial aid assistance and scholarship opportunities.

SCE 6 discussed how school counselors can work with students who come from low socioeconomic backgrounds by referencing micro scholarship programs that range from K-12 and explained how these scholarships expose parents and guardians to funds for university as long as the student is able to maintain good grades. This participant added that these micro scholarships often "directly align to specific universities and are a good way to educate parents and students about paths to college." Similarly, SC 2 and SC 3 both described their roles in providing financial literacy support including instructions on how to complete the FAFSA

application. The idea that school counselors need to be aware of their own biases so they are in a better position to provide students with diverse experiences related to helping them succeed regardless of race, socioeconomic status, or how much college experience is shared among family members represent the pillars that support the final subtheme that school counselors are expected to meet the needs of *all* students.

3.6. Meeting the Needs of All Students

While reviewing the subthemes of: being aware of personal biases, providing school counseling graduate students with diverse experiences, supporting families of potential first-generation college students, and recognizing and respecting student differences, the research team also agreed to identify *meeting the needs of all students* as the final subtheme to support the multicultural influences relating to college and career readiness. SCE 5 called attention to the importance of training, work experience, and preparatory issues related to school counselors being able to meet the needs of all students. SCE 5 suggested that “we have to have some type of blueprint and/or standards in place in making sure that we have the necessary skills to be able to address students’ needs regardless of their background... “not just putting a one-size-fit-all approach, [we need to] take an individualized approach when addressing these needs.” Similarly, SCE 12 also addressed planning and the need for school counselors to modify lessons to accommodate the needs of diverse students.

Theme Four: ASCA’s MBSS in Practice

Considering half of the interview and focus group questions were specific to ASCA’s updated student standards, the theme of how school counseling professionals currently understand and implement them into practice was quickly identified by the research team. To support this overarching theme, the research team was able to construct five sub-themes that are

linked to ASCA's MBSS in school counseling programs including: *understanding ASCA's MBSS, motivation to use ASCA's MBSS, appreciation for the updated standards, how ASCA's MBSS are used, and recommendations for ASCA and the MBSS.*

4.1. Understanding ASCA'S MBSS

The primary researcher of this study introduced ASCA's MBSS to each participant by asking them to describe their understanding of ASCA's updated resource which generated a wide range of responses. Although two participants admitted to having no experience learning about or using ASCA's resource, common participant responses acknowledged that there are "35 of them" and multiple participants described this resource as a framework that can align with the role of the school counselor. Specific participant quotes that represents school counseling professionals' current understanding of ASCA's MBSS include:

SCE 12:

My understanding is that they were created using some best practices and sort of research as the foundation. And my understanding is that in a comprehensive school counseling program, all of the ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors have been addressed so that student, by the time they graduate—the school counselor has addressed all of those ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors... We are preparing students to have the mindset of being successful, whether that is in the workforce immediately after high school or whether they're going on to post-secondary behaviors.

SCE 6:

ASCA's Mindsets and Behaviors include three sections. The role that those Mindsets play, it gives students standards to which they want to work. They

analyze school data to determine deficiencies in the school so that the programs that they run are meeting a data-informed need in the school, but measuring the extent to which they've met their goals would be established by the Mindsets and Behaviors. There are Mindsets and Behaviors that the school counselor will identify are linked to deficiencies in this college and career-readiness area.

SC 2:

I am familiar with them and at one time I was very familiar with them, because one of the other requirements, the work we did in my master's program, was that they made us crosswalk all of our activities with the Mindsets and Behaviors. So, at one point, I would have been able to say them in my sleep because we did so many freaking crosswalks which was awful.

Because the school counseling professionals who participated in this study were asked to explain their understanding of ASCA's updated standards before they were asked to share how they are currently using them, the research team was able to get a general idea of how well these standards are being addressed in school counseling graduate programs. Data specific to school counseling professionals' understanding of ASCA's MBSS allowed the research team to develop the following theme which focuses on what motivates school counselor educators to introduce graduate students to ASCA National Model.

4.2. Motivation to Use ASCA's MBSS

When participants were asked what motivates them to incorporate ASCA's MBSS into their practice, most participants were able to describe specific reasons they have adopted ASCA's resource in their work. SCE 2 was quick to respond, "student success!" and went on to

explain how research suggests that school counselors who implement the ASCA National Model are more likely to possess higher levels of job satisfaction. SCE 3 simply said: “I love it – there’s so much you can do with them because they’re broad and they’re general and they’re not as long as they used to be.” SCE 9 described ASCA’s MBSS as a “wonderful document” and shared an appreciation for ASCA’s emphasis on demonstrable skills and behaviors and went on to suggest “out of anything ASCA’s come up with in terms of student standards, this particular set of standards is the most congruent with that and I appreciate it and I appreciate how well it invites that capacity building.” The following participant quotes represent professional school counselor’s perceived motivation to use ASCA’s MBSS in greater detail.

SCE 7 described ASCA’s MBSS as a “phenomenal document” and added:

I love it because what it does is it gives us a map to use to really work with our students. A lot of people use it for their end of year evaluation. Well I adopted to do this, and behaviors and mindsets, but really – everything we do should be based on it... it’s a great document. And we need to make more use of it.

SCE 3 stated that ASCA’s MBSS are:

So valuable and useful. And I can speak to the feedback my students give me I think, which would be more helpful than probably my thoughts. And I support their thoughts. But they find that it’s really easy to get a big picture of student development with the standards, and where they can start in elementary school and go through middle and high school and kind of cast this net over how they’re developing students out in the schools. And it helps them pinpoint areas across all of the academic curriculum inside the schools.

SCE 6 described a personal goal of:

Teaching students the value of the ASCA National Model in such a way that they would never start a new position without using any of the tools... It would be like going into a classroom on your first day and not using a lesson plan or not using the teacher's manual. So, I want them to recognize that it's the only way you can function as a school counselor.

SCE 5 shared their view of how ASCA's MBSS:

Advocates not only for school counselors but for our students and for change, for leadership initiatives and ethical practices... and can provide students with opportunities while attempting to clarify the role of the school counselor to leadership and stakeholders on a professional level.

From a school counselor's perspective, SC 2 expressed an opinion of ASCA's MBSS:

I really like them. I think it's easy to use because of how they changed it into that one-pager. I think because they are somewhat broad, it's easy to kind of go like crazy with it. You can really align your lessons and things so many ways with them. But I think that they're easy to use and it definitely covers all of the important aspects of what we're doing with our students every day. So, I think it's good. I mean, I think they're so much easier than the old standards.

In addition to SC 2's positive remarks of ASCA's document, other high school counselors shared their appreciation for ASCA's MBSS. During the first focus group, SC 3 expressed, "I like them. I think that they're useful. I think sometimes they can help focus certain lessons to make sure that you're highlighting certain things." Similarly, SC 1 said, "I think it's a great resource as far as sharing with people in my sphere of influence just to say, 'Hey, this is

kind of the scope and sequence of where this program needs to go'... it's a helpful, simple thing to share with a wide range of people."

Another specific motivation that participants of this study indicated as a strength of ASCA's MBSS is that it is "finally speaking the language of school districts" (SCE 6). SCE 6 described ASCA's resources as "valuable tools in communicating to administration that school counselors are an integral part of the team and we can be held accountable for what we do" and commended ASCA for providing specific resources that encourage school counselors to use data in supporting their school counseling program. SCE 6 went on to explain how professionals use data to inform, deliver, and assess the effectiveness of services provided and added:

Now we have this tool kit that's been provided to us by ASCA that a lot of school counselors would not otherwise do this because it's so time-consuming to develop such tools. But ASCA has created them. The mindsets and the behaviors just being one of the many tools that we can use to demonstrate our effectiveness and to advocate for our position... it will actually impact the things that the principal and the superintendent and parents care about in terms of educating students. So I'm motivated to embrace, not only the mindsets and behaviors but all the ASCA tools and use them to demonstrate the effectiveness of what we do and the value of a school counselor in the school district.

Furthermore, SCE 6 shared a personal observation of how principals are typically accustomed to assessing lesson plans from teachers which, like ASCA's MBSS, are supported by student-learner outcomes. This participant went on to suggest that school counselors are able to use ASCA's resource to assess how well students were able to meet desired outcomes. SCE 6

continued by explaining how ASCA's resource can help school counselors develop lesson plans that:

Speak the language of the system and say, 'Here are my outcomes, and this is the extent to which my students have met these outcomes as a result of my intervention. So, I value the mindsets and behaviors because historically, we haven't had a tool to kind of speak the language of administrators and communicate to them.

In addition to the specific examples of why school counseling professionals are motivated to use ASCA's MBSS, multiple participants of this study also expressed their appreciation of the updates in ASCA's new set of student standards.

4.3. Appreciation for the Updated Standards

Multiple school counseling professionals expressed an appreciation of ASCA's updated student standards and declared their support of how ASCA incorporated them into their 4th National Model. SCE 3 remembered how ASCA's previous set of student standards included "so many competencies" and added:

I would notice my students kind of shut down and kind of get into that space of, where do I start? Where do I begin? And when the mindsets and behavior standards came out, they were just lighter. They were less, and watching the students enjoy implementing them, I think, has been super fun and invigorating for me.

SCE 3 also stated that:

The changes are quite interesting, and I could see where they could be helpful. I hope ASCA's going to do some training on it because there are some pretty distinct differences.

Similarly, SCE 8 expressed their satisfaction regarding ASCA's updated student standards by suggesting:

With the former standards, they were very specific for each domain. Right? If you're looking at academic, social-emotional, which at that time, I think they had listed them as personal, emotional, and even the career component. But here, with our college and career readiness standards, there's that intersectionality of how all of these pieces encompass the human or the student in a holistic manner and how all of these also are skills that are supporting students, if we're thinking in the school setting, and just kind of the behavior, learning strategy, self-management, social skills, which also translate into post-secondary success. And so it's just also, the way I see it, is preparation for not just only college and career readiness, but preparation for transitioning out of high school into an independent lifestyle.

After participants of this study were asked to describe their understanding of ASCA's MBSS and encouraged to share specific advantages and opinions related to the standards, school counselor educators as well as high school counselors were prompted to share how they have experienced using this resource in the classroom or counseling setting.

4.4. How ASCA's MBSS are Used

In addition to expressing their support of the ASCA National Model and their standards for student success, school counseling professionals were also asked to identify specific ways

they have implemented ASCA's MBSS into their school counseling curriculum. SCE 7 recommended that school counselor educators who teach the practicum or internship course can incorporate ASCA's MBSS into their supervision seminars by having students identify the specific Mindsets and Behaviors that are presented during audio/video case presentations.

SCE 8, who explained how their school counseling program is designed to weave ASCA's Mindsets and Behaviors through their curriculum added shared a recent experience of:

Discussing the ASCA National Mindsets and even the domains of the ASCA National Model and college and career readiness and where some people assume that college and career readiness specifically is going from high school into a college setting or university. But talking about – it's about the process of preparing students to be successful in K-12 schools but also for the preparation of work or post-secondary success.

Furthermore, SCE 5 mentioned that simply reviewing the document with students can promote the usefulness of ASCA's resource. This participant shared a personal experience of working in an atmosphere where people believed "Oh. ASCA Model doesn't work. I don't believe in it. And we don't do this here." However, this participant added that when she displayed the MBSS document on her SMART board, the students quickly realized "Oh, these are all the roles their school counselor does" and subsequently able to confidently refer to the document throughout the semester.

SCE 6 mentioned that she uses the document to assess students and school counseling program based on the Mindsets and Behaviors. Specifically, this school counselor educator requires students to analyze school data and incorporate ASCA's Mindsets and Behaviors to develop a plan to address the needs of the school. This participant went on to explain that once

students access the standards in a lesson plan, they would then be able to deliver that plan and assess how well they were able to help students reach their goals.

Another specific way school counseling professionals can operationalize ASCA's 35 Mindsets and Behavior standards that SCE 7 and focus group participants acknowledged was the implementation of ASCA's MBSS supporting documents such as *Career Conversation Starters* and the *Planning Tool*. Specific to ASCA's Planning Tool, SC 5 described it as "a really good resource" that was developed to support ASCA's MBSS and shares their appreciation that the "language of the Mindsets and Behaviors can be used and shared with teachers to incorporate our lessons with things they're already doing." Specific to the Career Conversation Starters SCE 7 mentioned:

There's also one of the things that I use in addition to the Mindset and Behavior, which is actually an addendum to that, is the Career Conversations. And that career conversations is, well for this section of the Mindsets, these are questions that go along with that Mindset. Well that's invaluable for that. Cause if I'm not sure how to address that mindset with a student. Now I have it. It actually has questions for students, staff and parents, that college questions. And it's just awesome. And it's a lot of mindfulness. It's a lot of motivational interviewing in there. So being an 'MI guy', I absolutely love it.

In addition to sharing their thoughts and opinions of ASCA's MBSS as well as the specific ways school counseling professionals can use the resource, participants were also able to provide recommendations for ASCA.

4.5. Recommendations for ASCA and the MBSS

Through discussing ASCA's MBSS, multiple participants offered specific recommendations to the ASCA organization. SCE 3 said that she "would like to see an ASCA training" related to the MBSS and SCE 11 challenged ASCA to link this resource to specific competencies that counselors in training should be able to possess upon completing their school counseling program:

I think I would like to see ASCA really address college and career readiness counseling for school counselors in training and for practicing school counselors too. And I do think of the things missing are competencies for what should a school counselor be able to do. So, coming out of their master's program, what are some of the competencies that they should have in order to really do college and career readiness counseling work. I think we've got the start with the mindsets and behaviors, So, I would like to see first the competencies for the school counselors... I think that's a big missing piece and it's a big gap in our profession of school counseling that I think is highly needed too.

SCE 11 continued by describing her "biggest challenge" in helping students is:

Being able to connect the mindsets and behaviors to what they can do. So, here's a student competency. What am I as a school counselor supposed to do to help them achieve that? So really making that connection. And that's where I would really like to see ASCA do more of. Here are the school counselor competencies that relate to these. If you want to do that set of mindsets and behaviors, what's the connection between here's what would say we want

students to do, but here's what school counselors should do in order to help the students do that.

To summarize how school counseling professionals currently understand and are able to incorporate ASCA's MBSS into practice, the research team identified five subthemes including their understanding of the resource, examples of what motivates them to use it, appreciation of the updated student standards, descriptions of how it can be used, and specific recommendations that school counselor educators have for ASCA's organization. The following theme examines specific challenges that school counseling professionals have indicated as potential barriers in effectively incorporating the standards into their practice.

Theme Five: Challenges Incorporating ASCA and the MBSS

Despite ASCA's MBSS being an evidence-based resource that is widely accepted and supported by many school counseling professionals and organizations, participants were invited to share any challenges or concerns they have related to the resource. Early in their interviews, two school counselor educators disclosed being former ASCA members and shared their decision to leave the organization was due to various reasons including tension between ACES and ASCA. Also, SCE 11 identified NOSCA's eight components as the closest to perfect method of addressing college and career readiness after sharing her frustration of ASCA's lack of student competencies.

Additionally, SCE 10 mentioned that the CACREP accredited school counseling program she is employed in is only set up to address ASCA in one course and went on to state, "there are pieces of that model that I just don't think work the way that I envision school counseling working and the way that school counseling kind of works in my community...like I said, the community in which I work, it doesn't. There's just no way that we would be able to get our job

done and do what we need to do for our students if we were following the ASCA Model.”

Furthermore, SCE 10 and SC6 both used the term “cookie cutter process” in describing ASCA’s MBSS as a ‘one-size-fits-all approach.’

The mindset that ASCA’s MBSS are “nothing that should be memorized” was expressed by SCE 2 and SCE 9. SCE 2 discussed how she is not interested in having students regurgitate components of the Model and SCE9 shared:

To be honest with you – I’ve valued most of the 35 Mindset standards incorporated into the M&B’s all along... but I don’t always think to include them and say, ‘We’re doing this, and oh, by the way, this is Mindset and Behavior Self-Management Skill number three’. These are standards I would love to see used, and it’s on me to incorporate them more frequently than I do.

In addition to expressing a lack of urgency regarding the importance of learning how to effectively use ASCA’s Model and resource, one school counselor educator identified the time and energy that is required in learning how to use this resource as a barrier that can prevent future school counselors from incorporating it into their school counseling program.

5.1. Lack of Time

While addressing the time it takes to effectively teach school counseling master’s level students to use ASCA’S MBSS with fidelity, SCE 7 stated:

You really have to go over each section and explain it. And I don’t know if there’s a time we actually really do that. I think we leave a lot of it up to the school counselor, future school counselors themselves... [the students need to be] willing to put the time in. It takes extra work to have them understand the

Mindsets. You would hope that, because if they're going to be master's students, that they would put the time and effort in. But we don't know for sure.

Beyond time being a factor of why many students have not adopted ASCA's MBSS as part of their school counseling program, multiple participants also discussed how a lack of buy-in can also make it difficult to promote ASCA's MBSS in school counseling graduate programs.

5.2. Lack of Buy-in

Multiple school counseling professionals discussed the lack of district, professional, and student buy-in as another barrier school counseling educators encounter when attempting to introduce future school counselors to ASCA's resources. SCE 5 was clear "the district that I'm working in does not reflect the ASCA Mindset and Behaviors," and SCE 6 shared a personal experience of witnessing the lack of buy-in at the university level. This participant described working in a counseling department that had a very negative view of the word "RAMP" and explained how "the ASCA National Model was shrouded in this negative eye-rolling mindset by professionals who claim 'But we'll never use it. Counselors never use it. Why are they teaching us this irrelevant stuff?'"

SCE 10 also discussed a lack of ASCA buy-in from school counselors-in-training who are not convinced ASCA's recommendations are effective and suggested "Honestly, the feedback that they give me is that it's so much more paperwork. 'When am I going to see my kids? I'm doing all of these reports. And I'm doing all this paperwork.'"

Along with the challenge of school counseling professionals and students displaying a lack of interest in ASCA and their resources, the research team was also able to identify a *lack of*

training as a hindrance of why many school counselor educators have struggled with effectively implementing ASCA into their school counseling curriculum.

5.3. Lack of Training

Each school counselor was asked how they were trained to use ASCA's MBSS and how they were trained to teach others to use ASCA's resources which resulted in the research team's development of this subtheme. SCE 8 cited personal experience of being a school counselor when ASCA's MBSS was released, regularly watching ASCA webinars, and attending ASCA's national conference as the means of how she has learned to use ASCA when training future school counselors. On the other hand, several school counselor educators identified a lack (or even absence) of direct instruction on best practices in preparing future counselors to use ASCA's MBSS.

When asked to share how they were prepared how to use the ASCA National Model or how to train others to use it, SCE 9 quickly responded "Not at all... they came out a few years back and landed in my inbox. I'm sure they've had webinars." Similarly, SCE 3 explained, "Well, they came about after I was already a counselor-educator, so I did not study those in a master's program or a doctoral program." SCE 10 also declared "I was not [trained]... I was never taught the ASCA Model" but added:

I'm prepared to teach the ASCA Model really well because I've done my own research. And I was a member of the association. And I can teach the ASCA Model just as well as anybody else. But nobody taught it to me. I learned the ASCA Model through being a member of ASCA and doing my research and reading and doing things like that.

Related to how a lack of training can affect the school counselor educator's ability to effectively introduce school counseling students to ASCA's MBSS, the research team also identified a lack of understanding of ASCA's MBSS as a subtheme of how school counseling educators were trained to use the model and resource. When asked to describe their understanding of ASCA's MBSS, SCE 4 mentioned that although she "heard about them," she has not "read much about it and not prepared to answer the question."

Similarly, SCE 10 quickly responded:

I don't know. I have no idea. And honestly, I don't really follow ASCA's Model, and actually our state's model is designed to kind of mirror the ASCA Model, but what I found is that the community with which we work, the ASCA Model does not work. I don't know of anybody who's using the ASCA Model in a school. So, it's really non-prescriptive, school-counseling models that we're using.

In relation to the subtheme of school counselor educator's awareness of a lack of training being a barrier that prevents many professors from addressing the ASCA National Model and the MBSS resource with students, multiple participants of this study also identified a lack of understanding on the part of students and colleagues as a challenge of introducing this Model to school counselors-in-training.

5.4. Lack of Understanding

SCE 3 expressed, "I know those standards very well, but my department doesn't. And so, it's been a matter of having more conversations about the ASCA National Model with our entire department so that all the faculty are aware of what the school counselors are learning, and they're aware of those mindset standards and behaviors," which indicates that although some

school counselor educators may be aware of the standards, many CACREP faculty members are not.

SCE 7 also expressed frustration of knowing the standards, but not being able to effectively communicate them with other school counseling professionals who demonstrate a lack of understanding towards them. This participant suggested that there are many school counseling programs where the Mindsets and Behaviors are not completely taught and shared a personal example of applying to a school counseling faculty position and including the standards in a presentation which resulted in the interview team reporting, ““Oh wow. We were not aware of the Mindsets’. The people were school counselor educators!”

To support SCE 7’s concern that school counseling students generally lack understanding of ASCA’s MBSS, SCE 11 shared, “I think that a lot of them are vague” and explained that she recently required school counseling orientation students to use specific Mindsets and Behaviors in developing ASCA lesson plans. “And without fail, each one of them is like, ‘I don’t really know. How can I really be sure that they meet this particular standard?’”

To support the final theme of the challenges related to incorporating ASCA and the MBSS, participants of this study have identified a lack of time, buy-in, training, and understanding as common challenges faced while attempting to incorporate ASCA’s MBSS into school counseling programs. These areas can serve as potential areas of focus for school counseling professionals and school counseling programs.

Summary

In summary, the twelve school counselor educators and five school counseling professionals who participated in this study shared a range of personal experiences and insights regarding college and career readiness and ASCA’s MBSS. The research team identified five

overarching themes: *college and career readiness, challenges addressing CCR in school counseling graduate programs, multicultural influences, ASCA's MBSS in Practice, and challenges with ASCA and the MBSS*, as well as several subthemes that further represented participant experiences. In the next chapter, the researcher will discuss how each theme reflects previous research.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore school counseling professionals' experiences addressing the topic of college and career readiness in school counseling programs with a specific focus on ASCA's Mindsets and Behavior Standards for Student Success resource (ASCA, 2014). Although school counseling professionals are widely acknowledged as essential support members in ensuring all K-12 students are prepared for post-secondary success, many researchers have suggested that novice school counselors often report that they feel underprepared to address college and career readiness concerns with students (Brown, 2018; Morgan, Greenwaldt & Gosselin, 2014; Savitz-Romer, 2012). To support school counselors in their efforts in ensuring all students are prepared for post-secondary success, ASCA released an updated set of student standards (MBSS) as well as supporting documents that school counselors can incorporate in their school counseling program. This study provided 12 school counselor educators with an opportunity to share how college and career readiness is addressed in their CACREP accredited school counseling program and allowed for four high school counselors and one college and career readiness counselor to participate in follow-up focus groups to also share their experiences related to the topic.

Although the research clearly acknowledges the importance of the school counselor's role in implementing a college and career readiness plan into their K-12 school counseling program as well as examines their perceptions of competency in addressing the topic, there is a lack of literature that examines how college and career readiness is currently being addressed in CACREP accredited school counseling programs. Each of the 17 school counseling professionals who participated in this study were encouraged to share personal experiences of discussing

college and career readiness and the ASCA National Model in their CACREP accredited school counseling graduate program. This study addressed the gap in the literature, in particular, by providing school counselor educators with an opportunity to share their experiences related to how college and career readiness and the ASCA National Model is addressed in their CACREP accredited school counseling graduate program.

This study was guided by the following research questions: (1) What are school counseling professionals' experiences addressing college and career readiness? (2) What are school counseling professionals' experiences addressing ASCA's MBSS in CACREP accredited school counseling programs?

After allowing each participant two weeks to engage in member-checking of the completed interview and focus group transcriptions, the research team engaged in a thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) by analyzing transcripts to develop codes and themes that support participant responses to the research questions. The first theme, *conceptualizing college and career readiness*, focused on school counseling professionals' general understanding of their role in addressing college and career readiness with students as well as their personal opinions related to the topic. The second theme, *challenges addressing CCR in school counseling graduate programs*, focused on specific reasons school counseling professionals have reported to struggle with addressing the topic in their school counseling graduate program. The third theme, *multicultural influences*, emphasizes the important factors that school counseling professionals must take into consideration when creating a college and career readiness program. The fourth theme, *ASCA's MBSS in practice*, examines participant experiences of operationalizing ASCA's updated student standards. The final theme, *challenges with ASCA and the MBSS*, identifies

specific examples of how school counseling professionals have struggled to infuse ASCA's MBSS into their school counseling programs.

After discussing how each of the five themes reflects previous literature, the following section includes specific implications that the results of this study can offer to school counseling professionals, school counseling programs, and school counseling organizations such as ASCA and CACREP. Additionally, specific limitations of this study will be addressed, potential areas of future research will be provided, and a summary which highlights how collected data enabled the research team to successfully generate the themes and subthemes are included in this section.

Discussion of Findings

Although school counselors are at the forefront of ensuring all students are prepared for post-secondary success (Abel & Oliver, 2018), research indicates that novice school counselors often report that they feel underprepared to address college and career readiness concerns with their students (Brown, 2018). Thus, this study provided 12 school counselor educators, four high school counselors, and a college and career readiness counselor with an opportunity to share personal experiences related to college and career readiness and the ASCA National Model in CACREP accredited school counseling programs. The results of this study reflect school counseling professionals' personal experiences of how they have addressed the topic of college and career readiness in school counseling programs. Furthermore, the experiences of CACREP accredited school counselor educators, current high school counselors who have graduated from a CACREP accredited school counseling program, and a high school college and career readiness counselor, as explained below, examines familiarity and opinions of the ASCA National Model and their MBSS resource.

Conceptualizing College and Career Readiness

Despite researchers identifying the school counselor's responsibility of ensuring every student is prepared for post-secondary success as a 'national priority' (Savitz-Romer, 2012), researchers have also provided evidence to suggest that graduating high school students often indicate that they do not feel adequately prepared to transition into college and/or the workforce (Bettinger & Long, 2009; Johnson & Rochkind, 2010). Furthermore, as referenced throughout this manuscript, researchers have also suggested that many novice school counselors indicate that they do not feel adequately prepared to address college and career readiness concerns with K-12 students (Bridgeland & Bruce, 2011; Brown 2018). To address the disconnect between the importance of the school counselor's role in addressing college and career readiness and how well they're actually able to do it, the research team identified the first theme to support school counseling professionals' experiences of conceptualization college and career readiness. The researcher will use this section to compare each of the six subthemes that support how current school counseling professionals conceptualize college and career readiness in the school counseling profession and compare them to previous literature. These subthemes include: defining college and career readiness, college and career readiness at the elementary level, college is not for everyone, the financial burden of college, the military being an option, and school counselor's experiences and recommendations.

Although the primary model and resource that was addressed during this study was ASCA and the MBSS, participants of this study were able to identify various other organizations that have also set out to support school counseling professionals in ensuring students are prepared for post-secondary success. Other prominent organizations that participants of this study indicated as useful in developing a college and career readiness program include The College Board National Office for School Counselor Advocacy (NOSCA) and The National

Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC). Specific strategies that school counselor educators identified using when teaching future school counselors to develop college and career readiness include inviting guest speakers, encouraging personal research, and utilizing YouTube and Pinterest. Similarly, school counselors were also able to identify specific resources that they have used to address the topic college and career readiness with students including Career Clusters, Whiz Careers, Career Cruising, Naviance, PA Career Zone, Zello, College Horizons and Big Future. A common theme of specific college and career readiness strategies that were generated by both interview and focus group participants included the importance of addressing the financial aspect of college by incorporating financial aid support within their school counseling program.

Defining college and career readiness. Consistent with the literature (Abel & Oliver, 2018; Savitz-Romer, 2012) each of the school counseling professionals who participated in this study acknowledged that college and career readiness is comprised of the knowledge and skills students need in order to be successful after completing high school. Although each participant was asked to define college and career readiness in their own words, each definition closely resembled previous literature which examines the school counselor's responsibilities in developing a school counseling program that engages students as they develop postsecondary aspirations (Savitz-Romer, 2012). Furthermore, previous literature as well as the school counseling professionals who participated in this study also highlighted the opportunity that elementary school counselors' have to set a foundation in assisting K-12 students in setting and achieving post-secondary goals.

College and career readiness at the elementary level. A common theme that was discussed in detail by three participants of this study as well as in previous research relates to the

importance of the elementary school counselor's role in ensuring all K-12 students are college and career ready. Consistent with the literature (ASCA, 2017; Pulliam & Bartek 2018), multiple participants of this study discussed the opportunity that elementary school counselors have in being able to use student interest to engage younger students in career lessons. During individual interviews, multiple school counselor educators discussed their commitment in providing school counselors-in-training with resources and strategies that can help them develop a comprehensive school counseling program at the elementary level. Additionally, during both focus groups, high school counselors also discussed the elementary school counselor's role in incorporating college and career readiness lessons into their school counseling program. The general consensus held by previous literature (Pulliam & Bartek 2018), school counselor educators, as well as the high school counselors who participated in this study acknowledge that the role of the elementary school counselor is often overlooked when it comes to preparing students for post-secondary success. Therefore, because career development is a life-long process (Pulliam & Bartek 2018), school counselor educators should ensure they are adequately addressing the topic with their elementary school counseling students. Additionally, elementary school counselors should be sure to develop a comprehensive school counseling program which is comprised of lessons and activities that promote students to think about possible career aspirations.

College is not for everyone. Another key finding that was passionately shared by 11 out of the 12 school counselor educators as well as during both focus groups is the perception that not all students are best suited for a traditional four-year college experience. Similar to the 'career development' section of Savitz-Romer's (2012b) discussion paper, multiple participants of this study also addressed the school counselor's responsibility of supporting student's ability to set post-secondary goals that are a good fit for them. Because of the pressure that many school

districts put on high school professionals related to college acceptance rates, it has become common practice for high school counselors to encourage all students to apply to traditional four-year colleges and universities. The result of this common practice, as shared by multiple school counseling professionals who participated in this study, is that many students enroll in colleges and accrue substantial student loan debt, just to end up in positions that do not even require a college degree. Therefore, school counseling professionals may find it beneficial to research and discuss various post-secondary opportunities that are available to students.

Additionally, school counseling professionals may find it helpful to develop a network of other professionals that can further support K-12 students in succeeding after high school. In addition to the shared perception that college just isn't for everyone, multiple school counseling participants of this study also discussed the financial burden that is often associated with it.

The financial burden of college. Four school counselor educators identified the high cost of college as a primary reason school counselors should be prepared to assist students in developing alternative plans for post-secondary success. Similar to previous research (Savitz-Romer, 2014), multiple participants of this study discussed the reality of expensive tuition rates and how they often influence students' post-secondary planning. School counselors are in a position to offer concrete support by assisting students in learning about colleges that may be a good fit for them as well as providing them with financial aid resources (Holland, 2010), which mirrors the experiences that were shared by multiple participants of this study. Although a comprehensive school counseling program that is able to provide students with financial aid resources and access to scholarships can ultimately improve a school's college admissions rate (Bryan, Moore-Thomas, Day-Vines, & Holcomb-McCoy, 2011), school counseling professionals who participated in this study also recognize that there will always be students who are not

interested in paying for a college degree. To support students who do not wish to take on the financial burdens that are associated with college, participants of this study shared specific strategies that the school counselor can engage in such as being able to provide resources on trade schools, information about careers that do not require college degrees, and contact with recruiters who can provide them with information on enlisting in the military.

Military being an option. Researchers (Alger & Luke, 2015) organizations such as ASCA, and several school counseling professionals who participated in this study have advocated for the school counselor's role in supporting students who are interested in enlisting in the military. Furthermore, in agreement with (Cole, 2014), a school counselor educator who participated in this study expressed his opinions relating to the importance of school counselors understanding military culture in effort of supporting all students and families. Because of the high cost that is often associated with college, the uncertainty that many students face regarding what they really want to do with their future, and most notably, the pride that comes with serving our country, school counseling experts seemingly agree that a comprehensive school counseling program should include resources and support for students who are interested in enlisting in the military. Similarly, previous researchers and participants of this study also recommend that school counseling professionals become accustomed to military culture in preparation of supporting students who come from military backgrounds and are personally interested in enlisting. In addition to referencing their role in supporting high school students who are interested in joining the military, the school counselors who participated in the focus groups also shared personal experiences relating to how they have been able to address the topic of college and career readiness in their school counseling program.

School counselor experiences and recommendations. In addition to the twelve school counselor educators who shared personal experiences of addressing the topic of college and career readiness in their CACREP accredited school counseling program, four high school counselors and one college and career readiness counselor discussed their experiences related to the topic. Despite the extensive research which suggests many novice school counselors feel vastly underprepared to implement an effective college and career readiness program (Bridgeland & Bruce, 2011; Morgan, Greenwaldt & Gosselin, 2014), the school counseling professionals who participated in this study were confident in their explanation of their understanding and role in addressing college and career readiness in their school counseling program. However, regardless of how well novice school counselors are able to accurately define college and career readiness, the school counselors who participated in this study echoed many of the challenges that have been identified by previous research including: the lack of time available to implement an effective college and career readiness program (Clinedinst & Koranteng, 2017; Johnson & Rochkind, 2010), having large caseloads (Bryan, Holcomb-McCoy, Moore-Thomas, & Day-Vines, 2009), a disconnect between teachers and other professionals who are also attempting to help students develop plans for after graduation (Savitz-Romer, 2012), and the wide-range of how school counseling graduate programs have addressed the topic of college and career readiness (Morgan, Greenwaldt & Gosselin, 2014).

One of the challenges that school counselors commonly face in being able to effectively implement an effective college and career readiness program that was acknowledged by most of the participants in this study relates to the various duties and large caseloads that many school counselors are responsible for (Cholewa, Burkhardt, & Hull, 2015). One high school counselor shared that she wishes she had more time to engage in professional development opportunities

relating to the topic of college and career readiness which mirrored the recommendation of Savitz-Romer (2012b). Another participant expressed her frustration of having so many responsibilities that she always feels like she's "all over the place" and therefore not able to do any of her roles "super well." Because the high school counseling professionals who participated in this study as well as previous researchers (Hines, Lemons, & Crews, 2011) agree that the various duties and large student caseloads present a major challenge in how well school counselors are able to ensure all students are prepared for post-secondary success, the role of the school counselor should be continued to be reevaluated and supported. Furthermore, school districts which attempt to meet ASCA'S 250-1 student-counselor ratio recommendation (ASCA, 2014) will be better equipped to help students meet their post-secondary goals than schools who reflect the current National average of 455-1 (Bray, 2019).

Another challenge that multiple school counselors who participated in this study shared was the struggle of effectively communicating with teachers, students, and other professionals who have been tasked with addressing college and career readiness concerns with students. In comparison with the policy recommendation (Savitz-Romer, 2102b) which calls for revised job descriptions among professionals who are charged with supporting student's college and career goals, school counseling participants of this study discussed the frustration associated with coordinating with other professionals who are tasked with engaging in college and career readiness support with students. During both groups, current high school counselors shared the common barrier of not being able to effectively coordinate times to visit classrooms with teachers. The barrier of a lack of communication was also addressed by two school counselors who discussed the challenge of not being able to effectively communicate with students who don't respond to e-mails. Because the theme of how a lack of communication seemingly presents

a common barrier for school counseling professionals, school counseling districts should offer professional development opportunities that offers specific job descriptions for all parties involved in supporting student college and career readiness. School counselors may also find it beneficial to conduct meetings with the intention of developing a college and career readiness plan which is supported by all K-12 professionals.

In summary, although the research team agreed that the school counseling professionals who participated in this study seemed to have a good understanding of the topic, each participant was able to identify common barriers that they have faced when attempting to develop a college and career readiness program. Specific barriers that were shared by the school counseling professionals who participated in this study include: a lack of time, large student-counselor ratios, a disconnect between teachers and other professionals who are also attempting to assist students in making post-secondary plans, and a lack of college and career readiness training during school counseling graduate programs. To address these barriers, participants of this study provided specific recommendations that call for additional training that can potentially help novice school counselors feel more confident in developing an effective college and career readiness program. In addition to the first overarching theme of how school counseling professionals conceptualize college and career readiness with K-12 students, the research team also identified the common challenges that school counseling professionals have reported to encounter while attempting to address the topic in their school counseling graduate program as the second major theme.

Challenges addressing CCR in school counseling graduate programs

The second theme that was developed by the research team relates to how school counselor educators have experienced addressing college and career readiness in CACREP

accredited school counseling programs. Twelve school counselor educators were able to share personal experiences and challenges that they have encountered while attempting to introduce the topic of college and career readiness with school counseling students. Subsequently, the research team developed three sub-themes which represent the specific challenges that school counselor educators have identified as barriers that make it difficult to thoroughly address the topic of college and career readiness with school counselors-in-training. Because each of the challenges that were expressed by the school counselor educators is also supported by previous literature, school counseling faculty members may find it beneficial to evaluate how their program has been able to address the topic of college and career readiness by examining the following subthemes: *programs not specific to school counseling, being the only faculty member in the department, and college and career readiness is constantly evolving.*

Programs not specific to school counseling. Because school counseling students are often expected to complete their graduate programs alongside clinical and mental health counseling students, the amount of course work specific to addressing college and career readiness in schools is often limited. Researchers have made note of the fact that counselors-in-training are often required to take the majority of their coursework alongside students representing various counseling concentrations resulting in less instruction related to the practical realities of school (Hines, Lemons, and Crews, 2011). This view is in line with the two school counselor educators who discussed how the common structure of graduate programs which combine students who represent various concentrations in counseling can limit the specific content that students need in order to become proficient in their field. Perhaps the most direct and efficient way to rectify this dilemma is for school counseling graduate programs to implement a mandatory college and career readiness course or workshop which is facilitated by a

faculty member who has school counseling experience. In addition to the fact that many school counseling students are required to complete their graduate courses with classmates who are not necessarily interested in dedicating part of their class time to discuss the school counselor's role in ensuring K-12 students are prepared for post-secondary success, many CACREP accredited school counseling programs are also comprised of faculty members who have little to no experience in school counseling.

Being the only faculty member in the department. Two school counselor educators shared their experiences of being the only faculty member in their CACREP accredited program that has a school counseling background. The challenge of the lack of school counseling professionals in CACREP accredited school counseling programs was also acknowledged as a 'problem' in Hines et al.'s executive summary (2011) which identified five "steps for change." One of the steps for change called for a shift in university training programs to more directly support school counselors-in-training as they learn how to address the topic of college and career readiness with K-12 students. Unfortunately, as referenced by participants of this study, the lack of school counseling educators in counseling graduate programs still seems to be relevant today. Because many school counselor educators are often the only faculty members with school counseling experience, they are usually the only professionals responsible for developing and coordinating an effective school counseling curriculum. Therefore, because many school counselor educators do not have the luxury of collaborating with colleagues of similar research interests within their department, it becomes essential that these professionals take advantage of professional development opportunities as the field is constantly evolving.

College and career readiness is constantly evolving. Because of the national priority that has been placed on ensuring all students are prepared for post-secondary success, multiple

participants of this study also communicated the challenge of trying to stay up-to-date with a topic that is constantly being researched and updated. The idea that the topic of college and career readiness is evolving at such a fast pace is further supported by ASCA's decision to update their student standards to reflect the current trends of the profession (Sparks, 2014). Because many of the models and techniques that school counseling professionals have learned to use are rapidly changing, it can become challenging for veteran school counselor educators who have developed a college and career readiness plan to seamlessly adapt to those changes.

In summary, the 12 school counselor educators who participated in this study were able to identify three specific challenges that they have faced while attempting to introduce school counseling graduate students to college and career readiness strategies and resources within their CACREP accredited school counseling program. These challenges include the fact that many school counseling programs are comprised of students who have various counseling interests which drastically limits the discussions specific to how school counselors can develop successful college and career readiness programs, a lack of faculty members who have school counseling experience, and the fact that college and career readiness models and strategies are changing at such a fast pace that it becomes difficult for many professionals to stay up-to-date with the literature. The next theme that was identified by the research team highlights the specific multicultural considerations that were shared by the school counseling professionals who participated in this study.

Multicultural Influences

Acknowledging culture and promoting diversity is an essential component of developing a comprehensive school counseling program (ASCA, 2012). Each school counseling professional who participated in this study was able to identify specific multicultural considerations that are

related to addressing college and career readiness with K-12 students. The various multicultural factors that were identified by the school counseling professionals who participated in this study represents a parallel mindset that suggests that school counseling professionals at every level should: be aware of potential biases, attempt to provide students with diverse experiences, develop a plan to work with first-generation college students, strive to remain multiculturally competent, and be ready to acknowledge the financial barriers that many students and families face when developing a plan for post-secondary success.

Being aware of biases. Similar to the existing literature (Curry, 2018), participants of this study recognize how personal biases can affect the supervision and mentorship process. However, participants of this study identified specific strategies that school counselor educators can incorporate into their training to combat the potential challenges that their biases can present. One of the primary strategies that participants of this study have indicated being successful in addressing the challenges personal biases can present includes the use of guest speakers who are able to offer various insights, perspectives, and experiences. Furthermore, in response to the claim that the success of a student population heavily relies on the effectiveness of the counselors serving that particular population (Savitz-Romer, 2012b), one school counselor educator discussed the importance of broaching the topic of being aware of biases with students in a way that not only communicates acknowledgement of personal biases, but also the parallel process that school counseling graduate students should engage in when working with K-12 students. Because the importance of recognizing how biases can impact the population counseling professionals work with has been documented in previous literature (Curry, 2018; Savitz-Romer, 2012b), as well as discussed by participants of this study, it is clear that the topic of recognizing self-awareness needs to be stressed within school counseling graduate programs.

Furthermore, current school counselors should continuously examine how their biases may be affecting their work and attempt to incorporate strategies to minimize them.

Providing students with diverse experiences. Consistent with the research (Choy, Horn, Nuñez & Chen, 2000; Farmer-Hinton, 2008), the results of this study reflect the importance of school counseling professionals promoting diverse experiences to support future school counselors. When asked what comes to mind when they think about multicultural concerns and considerations related to college and career readiness, the school counseling professionals who participated in this study acknowledged the importance of being culturally aware and sensitive, especially to marginalized students. Specific diverse experiences that were addressed by the school counseling professionals who participated in this study include: inviting guest speakers who are able to share diverse experiences, promoting school counseling students to engage in diverse practicum and internship experiences, and providing case-studies and supervising role plays which focus on increasing novice school counselors' self-awareness. In addition to sharing specific examples of how school counseling programs can provide school counselors-in-training with diverse experiences, participants of this study also discussed the school counselor's responsibility in working with potential first-generation college students.

First-Generation college students. The importance of the school counselor's role in working with potential first-generation college students has been thoroughly addressed by previous researchers (Cholewa, Burkhardt, & Hull, 2015; McKillip et al., 2012; Choy, Horn, Nuñez & Chen, 2000; Pham & Keenan, 2011; and Savitz-Romer, 2012a) and further discussed during this study. To support the implication that perspective first generation college students are significantly more likely to rely on the support of their school counselor compared to their non-first-generation peers (Cholewa, Burkhardt, & Hull, 2015), two school counselor educators and

all members of the focus groups described their mission in supporting potential first-generation college students. Furthermore, in response to the findings of Choy et al.'s (2000) study which indicates that school counselors can be doing more to support potential first generation college students, multiple participants of this study discussed their decision to conduct college readiness workshops to inform students and family members about the application process and financial aid opportunities. Another strategy that school counseling professionals can use when working with potential first-generation college students that was shared during data collection includes facilitating role plays between students and family members who have different thoughts regarding post-secondary plans (Savitz-Romer, 2012a). Because of the obvious implications associated with the anxiety that the college application and admissions process can present to students and families who have never experienced it before, it makes sense that the participants of this study and previous researchers agree that school counselors need to be prepared to support potential first-generation college students.

College and career readiness specific to ethnicity. Multiple school counseling professionals who participated in this study discussed the importance of knowing their student population and being prepared to work with them. Similar to the research which recognizes disparities between students of color and their White affluent peers regarding preparing for post-secondary success (Farmer-Hinton, 2008), multiple participants of this study discussed their personal experiences of recognizing and respecting the cultural backgrounds of students when implementing a college and career readiness program. For example, participants of this study discussed personal experiences of supporting Asian and Hispanic student populations. School counselors who recognize the ethnicity of students are in a much better position to implement strategies to support them (Farmer-Hinton, 2008; Savitz-Romer, 2012a).

Specific examples of how school counselors can support their students that were addressed by participants of this study include working with Asian students who are struggling to meet their families educational expectations and working with Hispanic students who come from families that do not value continued education. Furthermore, the idea that Hispanic students may be uncomfortable with signing paperwork or applying for college due to citizenship status was also discussed during this study by participants who see the school counselor's role as being an advocate for all students and school counselors will need to be ready to address this dilemma.

Socioeconomic status. To reflect previous literature which highlights the instrumental role that school counselors play in ensuring all students are prepared for post-secondary success, particularly minority students and those who come from low-income households (Bryan, Moore-Thomas, Day-Vines, & Holcomb-McCoy, 2011; McDonough, 2005), participants of this study also addressed the importance of the role of the school counselor when working with students who represent low socioeconomic backgrounds. According to Bryan et al. 2011, students who receive free or reduced lunch are less likely to apply to two or more colleges than students in high SES quartiles. Correspondingly, McDonough (2005) claimed that school counselors who actively support students who represent low-income, rural, and students of color increase the probability of students who apply and enroll in four-year colleges. This seems to be in line with the results of this study which highlights the importance of school counselors conducting workshops that assist students in completing the FAFSA form and provides students with potential scholarship opportunities. Throughout this study, the reoccurring theme of the importance of school counselors' knowing their student population suggests how school counselors can strengthen their college and career readiness program, and the participants of this study highlight the importance of taking the students' economic background into consideration

when engaging in college and career readiness counseling. Therefore, it is essential that school counseling professionals be prepared to support students who represent low socio-economic backgrounds by conducting workshops which offer financial aid literacy and potential scholarship opportunities.

The specific sub-themes that were described above (being aware of biases, providing students with diverse experiences, first-generation college students, college and career readiness specific to ethnicity, and socioeconomic status) can be combined to reflect the final subtheme of the multicultural influences of addressing college and career readiness in school counseling programs which focus on the school counselor's responsibility to meet the needs of individual students.

Meeting the needs of all students. The final sub-theme that supports the multicultural influences that were communicated by the school counseling professionals who participated in this study relates to the school counselor's responsibility in ensuring that they are able to meet the needs of all students closely reflects previous literature (Gilfillan, 2018; Savitz-Romer, 2012a; and Morgan, Greenwaldt, & Gosselin, 2014). In accordance with the recommendation of Gilfillan (2018), who stresses advocacy in developing interventions and school counseling programs which support underrepresented students including first-generation students, minority students, and students who represent low socio-economic backgrounds, participants of this study stressed the importance of school counselors being prepared to address the needs of all students rather than taking a 'one-size-fits-all' or 'cookie cutter' approach. To help professionals support all students in achieving post-secondary success, school districts and organizations can host college readiness-orientated trainings for school staff members to introduce them to best-practices and updated resources which was identified as a key policy recommendation of Savitz-

Romer's vision of how to prepare students for college (2012b). Finally, as communicated by multiple participants of this study throughout this study, school counselor's require quality training at the graduate level, constant reflection of self-awareness, and continuous personal research of potential college and career readiness strategies to effectively meet the needs of all students, regardless of race, socio-economic status, and college experience shared by the student's family.

ASCA's MBSS in Practice

Although participants of this study were able to identify various college and career readiness models and resources that they have used, the primary document that was examined in this study was ASCA's updated Mindsets and Behavior Standards for Student Success resource (ASCA, 2014). Because each school counseling participant was invited to share their understanding and opinion of the ASCA National Model and the MBSS resource, the research team was able to generate a clear theme of how ASCA's MBSS is being addressed and operationalized in school counseling programs. Subsequently, the research team was able to identify five subthemes to support how school counseling professionals are currently incorporating the ASCA National Model into their school counseling program. These subthemes include: understanding ASCA's MBSS, motivation to use ASCA's MBSS, appreciation for the updated standards, how ASCA's MBSS are used, and recommendations for ASCA.

Understanding ASCA's MBSS. Each of the 17 school counseling professionals who participated in this study were asked to share their understanding of ASCA's MBSS resource. Although two participants shared their lack of understanding of ASCA's MBSS by admitting that they did not receive training on the resource, most of the school counseling professionals who participated in this study were able to share a general understanding of the ASCA National

Model and their updated student standards. Furthermore, the research team agreed that participants of this study support Abel & Oliver's (2018) claim that school counselors who implement the ASCA National Model are in a much better position to engage K-12 students in post-secondary planning, help them identify personal abilities and interests, and promote self-awareness of the specific *Mindsets & Behaviors*. In addition to acknowledging participants' general understanding of ASCA's MBSS, the research team was also able to identify other specific reasons school counseling professionals are motivated to use the resource.

Motivation to use ASCA's MBSS. Most of the school counseling professionals who participated in this study were able to quickly identify specific reasons they continue to infuse ASCA's MBSS into their school counseling program. Similar to previous literature (Carey & Dimmitt, 2012), multiple participants of this study indicated that school counseling professionals should adopt the ASCA National Model into their school counseling program to promote student success. Participants of this study described ASCA's updated student standards as a 'phenomenal' and 'wonderful' document and one school counselor educator compared the school counselors use of ASCA's MBSS to a teacher's obligation to prepare lesson plans. Furthermore, in agreement with previous research, participants of this study also recognize specific benefits of using the data that can be derived from implementing a Recognized ASCA Model program (RAMP) to support students in setting and achieving post-secondary goals (Goodman-Scott, Betters-Bubon, & Donohue, 2015; Young & Kaffenberger, 2011). Also, consistent with previous research (Pyne, 2011) which showed a moderate to strong relationship between comprehensive school counseling programs supported by the ASCA National Model and school counselors' job satisfaction, participants of this study also indicated that school counselors who infuse ASCA's MBSS into their school counseling program tend to be much

more satisfied with their career than those who do not. Finally, participants of this study also shared their appreciation for the updated standards in helping to bridge the communication gap between school counselors and administration as they finally speak “the language of the districts.” In addition to identifying student success, school counselor preparation, job satisfaction, and the MBSS finally speaking the language of school districts as specific motivation to use the resource, multiple participants of this study also shared their appreciation and support of ASCA’s updated student standards.

Appreciation for the updated standards. On the first page of the fourth edition of the ASCA National Model (ASCA, 2019), the MBSS which was originally released in 2014, is reintroduced as a principal component of ASCA’s updated National Model. These updated Mindsets and Behavior standards were developed to replace ASCA’s original National Standards (Campbell & Dahir) which were released in 1997. An extensive review of the literature related to ASCA’s decision to update their student standards concluded with an overall sense of agreement that an update in the standards was necessary (Amatea & Clark, 2005). Every school counseling professional who acknowledged the update in ASCA’s student standards communicated their approval of the updated version by suggesting that it’s much easier to read and understand. Therefore, because of the extensive amount of research which supports the creation of ASCA’s MBSS resource, the detailed literature review which supports the effectiveness of the model, as well as the feedback from the school counseling professionals who participated in this study, school counselors who are not familiar with the ASCA National Model should consider learning about and utilizing the Model and their corresponding resources. Once school counseling professionals become familiar with each of the 35 mindsets and behaviors that are included in

ASCA's recently updated document, they are then able to operationalize each mindset and behavior standard as described by participants within the following sub-theme.

How ASCA's MBSS are used. ASCA has provided school counseling professionals with multiple supplemental resources that can support them in their efforts in ensuring students are prepared for post-secondary success. One of those resources, ASCA's *Planning Tool* assists school counselors in developing a comprehensive college and career readiness program was addressed by three participants during data collection. ASCA's *Career Conversation Starters* was also referenced by multiple school counseling professionals who participated in this study. Finally, ASCA's *Student Competency Database* (2015) which can be used to generate learning objectives that address specific mindsets and behaviors was not acknowledged at all during data collection suggesting ASCA continue to develop and promote their database. The implications of the data that was generated during this study suggest that the professionals who are aware of ASCA's resources generally support them. Also, because ASCA's *Student Competency Database* (2015) provides school counseling professionals with specific interventions that align with the MBSS and common core standards but were not addressed by any of the school counseling professionals during data collection, school counseling professionals should continue to submit updated competencies as well as work together with ASCA to promote the resource.

Furthermore, in addition to the supplemental resources provided by ASCA, researchers have also identified ASCA's MBSS as an effective resource that school counselor educators can use during practicum and internship courses (Studer, 2016). Similar to Studer's recommendation of assigning practicum and internship students with a conceptual activity of using ASCA'S MBSS to create smart goals for their sites, two school counseling educators who participated in this study shared that they require their practicum and internship students to complete this

activity. Because this activity allows students to practice creating SMART goals while learning about the ASCA National Model and the updated Mindsets and Behaviors, school counselors may find it beneficial to incorporate this lesson into their school counseling curriculum.

Recommendations for ASCA. In addition to sharing an appreciation for ASCA's updated student standards as well as describing their experiences of operationalizing the resource, participants of this study also had specific recommendations for the American School Counseling Association. The primary recommendation that participants of this study had for the ASCA organization reflected much of the research which calls for additional training to support school counselors in effectively implementing the Model and the MBSS resource (Morgan, Greenwaldt, & Gosselin, 2014). These trainings that focus on the changes in updated National Model can be offered as webinars that are promoted and sponsored by school districts and school counseling graduate programs. Furthermore, because ASCA has been continuing to develop their student competencies database and unknown by many school counseling professionals, ASCA professional development sessions should include an activity where school counselors review and develop student competencies that can be included in the database. Therefore, the results of this study reflects previous literature calls for additional collaboration between ASCA and school counseling programs with the ultimate goal of offering school counseling professionals' additional college and career readiness training. Through these additional trainings, the MBSS and supporting documents such as ASCA's planning tool, Career Conversation Starters, and the student competencies database will indirectly be promoted to support school counselors as they help K-12 achieve post-secondary success. To further support the recommendations school counseling professionals have for ASCA, the final sub-theme that was generated by the research team highlights the challenges that many school counseling professionals have faced while

attempting to implement the ASCA National Model and the MBSS resource into their school counseling program.

Challenges with ASCA and the MBSS

The final theme of this study that was developed by the research team focuses on the specific challenges school counseling professionals face while attempting to implement the ASCA National Model and MBSS resource into school counseling programs. Specific challenges in addressing the ASCA National Model and MBSS in school counseling programs that were shared by participants of this study include: a lack of time, a lack of buy-in, a lack of training, and a lack of understanding. These four sub-themes represent common barriers that have resulted in the low perceptions of competency displayed by novice school counselors in addressing the topic of college and career readiness and are discussed in detail below.

Lack of time. Consistent with previous literature (Hilts, Kratsa, Joseph, Kolbert, Crothers, Nice, & 2019; Morgan, Greenwaldt, & Gosselin, 2014; McDonough, 2005), participants of this study identified the lack of time that school counselors have to successfully implement the ASCA National Model and MBSS resource with fidelity as a primary challenge that is shared between school counselor educators as well as K-12 school counselors. During participant interviews, several school counselor educators identified the amount of time that it takes to adequately introduce future school counselors to the ASCA National Model as a primary challenge they have encountered when attempting to infuse supporting documents such as the MBSS into their school counseling graduate programs. One school counselor educator shared his perception that teaching future school counselors how to effectively incorporate ASCA's MBSS can be time consuming because of the importance of understanding each mindset and behavior before learning how to operationalize the resource. This participant went on to suggest that

school counseling graduate students need to be willing to put the work and time in if they are truly interested in fully understanding how to use the ASCA National Model to address college and career readiness with K-12 students. The implications of the lack of time that school counselor educators have to address the topic of college and career readiness within school counseling graduate programs once again calls for additional training on how school counselor educators can most effectively address the topic within their counseling graduate programs. Furthermore, because the school counselor educators who participated in this study indicated that a lack of time makes it difficult to adequately address the topic with school counselors-in-training, novice school counselors may want to consider to research the topic on their own time if they want to better understand how they can ensure all students are prepared for post-secondary success.

Additionally, participants of the focus groups also indicated that a lack of time is a challenge they face when attempting to implement the ASCA National Model and MBSS into their K-12 school counseling program. Despite ASCA's (2014) recommendation of 250 students per counselor, each of the high school counselors who participated in this study shared that their student-counselor ratio is larger and further explained that overwhelming caseloads and responsibilities present a common challenge of effectively incorporating the ASCA National Model into their school counseling program. Because the barrier of the time that it takes to teach and effectively implement ASCA's MBSS has been highlighted by previous research as well as participants of this study, training specific to how school counseling professionals can streamline the MBSS and supporting resources is warranted. School districts and schools would also benefit from attempting to adhere to ASCA's recommended student-counselor ratio of 250-1 to support school counselors as they work to ensure all students are prepared for post-secondary success.

Lack of buy-in. Previous research has revealed a lack of confidence, lack of administrative support, time spent of clerical work, lack if parental support, time spent testing, and time constraints as common barriers school counselors have reported to encounter in their quest of successfully implementing the ASCA National Model (Hilts, Kratsa, Joseph, Kolbert, Crothers, Nice, & 2019). However, this study adds to the literature as four participants identified a lack of buy-in among school counselors as another barrier that has prevented school counseling experts in adopting the ASCA National Model in their school counseling program. In fact, two school counselor educators shared their decision to terminate their ASCA membership during this study, one school counselor educator shared that the district she works in “does not reflect the mindsets and behaviors” and continued by suggesting that the district has a “very negative view of the word RAMP”, and multiple participants of this study called attention to the amount of time that it takes to effectively implement the ASCA National Model. Because the ASCA National Model is comprised of stances developed and supported by school counseling individuals, there is most likely always going to be other professionals who have alternative views of best-practices. Similarly, because ASCA is not the only organization that has set out to support school counselors, there will most likely always be school counseling professionals who do not buy-in to the Model. However, trainings that explain the reasons why ASCA has developed specific strategies and resources, may result in more professionals attempting to use the ASCA National Model to address college and career readiness.

Lack of training. A reoccurring theme in previous literature as well as data that was collected during this study relates to the lack of training school counseling professionals have received regarding how to effectively infuse the ASCA National Model to address college and career readiness (Bridgeland & Bruce, 2011; Brown 2018; Morgan, Greenwaldt & Gosselin,

2014; Savitz-Romer, 2012). In line with the results of Bridgeland & Bruce (2011) which surveyed more than 5,300 middle and high school counselors and revealed that only 16% felt “very well trained” to address the topic of college and career readiness with students, 28% believed their training did not prepare them very well for their job, and 56% indicated that they felt only somewhat trained, only two out of the five school counselors who participated in this study felt adequately prepared to confidently implement the ASCA National Model and MBSS into their school counseling program. Furthermore, in accordance with the claim of Savitz-Romer (2012a) which calls for an increased attention of college and career readiness counseling in counseling education programs, most of the participants of this study indicated the clear need for additional college and career readiness training for school counselors-in training.

In addition to supporting the previous research regarding the perceptions of a lack of training provided to future school counselors during graduate programs, a major finding of this study is that current school counselor educators also report a lack of training specific to using the ASCA National Model and their recently updated MBSS. In discussing how well they were prepared to teach others to implement the ASCA National Model and the MBSS resource, most of the participants were quick to respond that they weren’t. SCE 3, SCE 8, SCE 9, and SCE 10 each discussed their experiences of being a seasoned counselor educator when the updated standards were released as well as their obligation to engage in personal research (reviewing the updated model and resources, watching webinars, and attending conferences) to become familiar with the resource. Because most school counselor educators have graduated from their counseling programs before ASCA released their updated National Model and their MBSS resource, are typically not required to engage in additional ASCA related training, and are often the only faculty member who has a school counseling background in their department, it is

important that school counseling graduate programs implements specific strategies to ensure their school counseling faculty members are trained to introduce school counselors-in-training to evidenced-based college and career readiness models and strategies such the ASCA National Model and the MBSS.

Lack of understanding. Similar to the challenge of the lack of training which has hindered the school counseling professionals' ability to effectively implement the ASCA National Model to address college and career readiness in school counseling programs, participants of this study also described a lack of understanding specific to ASCA's updated resource as a hardship. Multiple school counseling professionals discussed a personal lack of understanding of ASCA's 'vague' MBSS. Furthermore, mirroring previous literature (Hines, Lemons, & Crews 2011) participants also identified a lack of understanding among other faculty members in counseling graduate programs as a barrier in being able to effectively train school counseling graduate students to address the topic. Finally, the lack of understanding displayed by school counselors-in-training who continue to remain confused on how to incorporate the MBSS even after it is reviewed in class was also addressed by multiple school counselor educators who participated in this study. Because most of the school counseling professionals who participated in this study identified a lack of understanding regarding ASCA's MBSS among school counselor educators, clinical and mental health faculty members, and school counselors-in-training, it is clear that additional training is needed for all stakeholders who wish to implement the ASCA National Model to promote college and career readiness.

Implications for School Counseling Professionals

The results of this study represent a range of school counseling professionals' experiences and opinions related to college and career readiness, the ASCA National Model, and

how the MBSS resource is being utilized in school counseling programs. A major theme that has remained consistent throughout previous literature as well as within this study is the indication that many school counseling professionals often feel underprepared to address the topic of college and career readiness in school counseling programs. There has been a substantial amount of research which suggests that novice school counselors often feel underprepared to address college and career readiness concerns with K-12 students, and the results of this study indicate that school counselor educators also feel underprepared to address the topic with school counseling graduate students. Because the data that was collected during this study is consistent with previous literature regarding school counseling professionals' perceptions of a lack of college and career readiness preparation, a primary implication of this study is that school counseling professionals generally require more training on how to implement resources such as the ASCA National Model to address college and career readiness. This can be achieved through personal research, attending conferences, viewing webinars, and collaborating with other school counseling professionals who have experience supporting K-12 students in meeting their college and career goals.

Each school counseling professional who participated in this study was able to highlight specific multicultural considerations that has influenced their approach in implementing college and career readiness strategies in their school counseling program. One multicultural influence that reflects the experiences of participants of this study as well as supported by previous research highlights the importance of school counseling professionals at every level being aware of personal biases. Another multicultural implication of this study is that school counseling professionals are responsible in providing students with diverse experiences. A third multicultural implication of this study that is supported by previous research and the data that

was collected during this study focuses on the school counselor's role in supporting potential first-generation college students. A final multicultural consideration supported by participants of this study relates to the importance of school counselors knowing their student population as well as best practices in helping all students to develop and achieve post-secondary goals. School counseling preparation programs should continue to stress the importance of self-awareness, provide students with diverse practicum and internship experiences, and promote the focus of supporting potential first-generation college students within school counseling graduate programs. Similarly, current school counselors should continue to reflect on those areas of multicultural considerations that were discussed by the school counseling professionals who participated in this study.

After thoroughly analyzing the data and completing a thematic analysis, the research team was able to identify specific implications that this study can provide to school counselor educators and school counseling graduate programs, school counselors and K-12 school counseling programs, ASCA, and CACREP.

Implications for School Counselor Educators and School Counseling Graduate Programs

Despite each participant being able to share their understanding of college and career readiness in the school counseling profession, the school counselor educators who participated in this study represented a wide-range of comprehension and ability to address the topic with their school counseling graduate students. The research team identified the following subthemes which can further support school counselor educators and school counseling programs: more training, attempting to ensure that there is more than one school counseling faculty member in the department, and requiring school counseling students to complete a course or workshop that

focuses on the school counselor's responsibility to address the topic of college and career readiness with K-12 students.

One of the major findings of this study is that the reason many novice school counselors reported that their CACREP accredited program has not adequately prepared them to address college and career readiness concerns with students (Bridgeland & Bruce, 2011; Brown, 2018; Morgan, Greenwaldt, & Gosselin, 2014) is because counselor educators were also not adequately prepared to address the topic. Multiple veteran school counselor educators of this study acknowledged that because the field is evolving at such a fast pace, they are not confident in their ability to implement current college and career readiness resources such as ASCA's MBSS into their instruction. Additional college and career readiness developed in collaboration between ASCA and school counseling programs can provide college and career readiness support for school counseling professionals. During these trainings, school counseling professionals can be introduced to specific resources and work together to develop student competencies. School counselor educators may also want to engage in personal research such as communicating with other professionals, attending workshops, conferences, and webinars if they want to maximize their ability to prepare future school counselors in being able to confidently implement a successful college and career readiness program.

In addition to promoting school counseling faculty members to remain familiar with best practices of addressing college and career readiness with school counselors-in-training, another implication of this study that was identified by the research team is that school counseling graduate programs can greatly benefit from ensuring their faculty department is comprised of multiple school counselor educators. Two participants of this study shared that the barrier of being the only school counselor educator in the department makes it difficult to collaborate

within the department. Therefore, counseling graduate programs which are comprised of multiple school counseling faculty members can provide school counselors-in-training with various points of views, personal experiences, and delivery of instruction from several school counselor educators. Also, counseling graduate programs which are comprised of multiple school counseling professionals would provide faculty members with more opportunities for collaboration in curriculum development.

Furthermore, school counseling graduate programs can better support future school counselors by implementing a required college and career readiness course or workshop into their school counseling preparation program. As shared by a participant of this study who is a current high school counselor who recently graduated from a CACREP accredited school counseling program and helped convince that program to implement a college and career readiness course through recommendations in an exit survey, one way to vastly improve novice school counselor's confidence is through the implementation of coursework specific to the topic. In addition to implementing courses and workshops that focus on college and career readiness strategies and resources, it is recommended that school counseling graduate programs encourage novice school counselors to advocate for their role while potentially inspiring professionals who work to address some of the challenges that were shared during this study such as overwhelming student caseloads and lack of support. Therefore, because of the previous literature which indicates novice school counselors' perception of a lack of preparedness regarding college and career readiness as well as experiences shared during this study, school counseling programs should examine how well their program is addressing the topic with graduate students.

Implications for K-12 School Counseling Programs

Because of the parallel process that was displayed throughout this study between school counselor educators and school counselors, the implications that were identified specific to school counselor educators can also be applied to K-12 school counselors. For starters, because the results of this study indicate that many school counselor educators were not adequately prepared to train others to address college and career readiness with resources such as ASCA's MBSS, a primary implication of this study is that novice school counselors should engage in personal research and professional development regarding best practices of addressing college and career readiness in school counseling programs. School districts can support school counselors' professional development and research opportunities through sponsoring memberships of school counseling organizations such as ASCA and ACA as well as encouraging participation in national and regional conferences. This investment can ultimately result in school counselors having a better understanding of specific resources that can be used to support students in setting and achieving post-secondary goals.

Although the student-counselor ratio recommended by ASCA is 250 – 1, participants of this study agreed that this number doesn't seem realistic in their district. Therefore, because previous literature (Hurwitz and Howell, 2014) as well as the participant experiences shared during this study which indicates school counselors are often overwhelmed with large student ratios and responsibilities, K-12 school counseling programs which are comprised of multiple school counselors are in a much better position to ensure all students are prepared for post-secondary success. To address the dilemma of overwhelming student caseloads, school districts would benefit from hiring more school counselors, collaborating with colleges and universities in structuring practicum and internship experiences which include hour requirements which focus on post-secondary planning, and allowing paraprofessionals to assist school counselors in

ensuring students are prepared for life after high school. It is essential that school districts provide school counselors with the resources they need to ensure students meet their social, emotional, and college and career goals.

Furthermore, the research team was able to identify specific implications for school counselors and K-12 school counseling programs within the theme of how current professionals conceptualize college and career readiness. Because previous research as well as experiences that were shared during data collection of this study highlight the importance of elementary school counselors in ensuring all students are prepared for post-secondary success, it is imperative that school counselor educators address the topic of college and career readiness with elementary school counseling students. Also, it is recommended that elementary school counselors incorporate college and career readiness lessons and strategies within their school counseling program. Additionally, participants of this study support previous literature by indicating that college may not be the best option for all students due to factors such as financial barriers and personal interests. Therefore, it is imperative that school counseling professionals ensure that their college and career readiness program is equipped with strategies and resources that provide all students with various options that promote post-secondary success.

Implications for ASCA

In addition to identifying specific recommendations that this study can provide to school counseling professionals, the research team also identified specific implications that this study can provide to ASCA. Similar to the literature which called on ASCA to update their student standards as well as the extensive research that school counseling professionals engaged in to develop the MBSS, participant opinions of ASCA's MBSS were generally positive. Specifically, school counseling professionals who participated in this study identified various motivating

factors to continue to use ASCA's MBSS including the belief that it's easier to use than the previous set of student standards, there's multiple ways to operationalize it, and it finally speaks the language of the district.

Furthermore, multiple participants of this study also provided ASCA with specific recommendations that can improve the school counselors' ability to implement the ASCA National Model within their school counseling program. The primary recommendation which has been addressed throughout this document calls for additional college and career readiness training and specific resources that can support school counselors in ensuring all students are prepared for post-secondary success. Another specific recommendation that was addressed by participants of this study and supported by Eric Sparks relates to the need of additional student competencies which reflect the mindsets and behavior standards. Although ASCA has developed a student competency database which invites all school counseling professionals to submit potential competencies, there was no mention of this database during data collection. Therefore, because school counseling professionals who participated in this study agree that ASCA can benefit from updating their student competency database, it is recommended that ASCA continue to develop and promote this resource to more effectively support school counseling professionals as they attempt to identify specific strategies that can be used to address each mindset and behavior with K-12 students.

Implications for CACREP

The research team also identified specific recommendations for CACREP after engaging in a thematic analysis. For starters, similar to the recommendation that school counseling professionals and ASCA provide additional training surrounding the topic, it would be beneficial if CACREP also required school counseling graduate programs to implement a college and

career readiness course or workshop that supports school counseling students in their efforts of promoting college and career readiness with K-12 students. Furthermore, despite providing school counseling graduate programs with a foundation that promotes addressing the topic of college and career readiness (CACREP, 2016), the organization does not have specific requirements of how school counseling graduate programs are expected to address the issue. Because CACREP does not currently provide accredited school counseling programs with specific requirements to address the topic of college and career readiness, participants of this study reported to have varying experiences of how the topic was addressed in their CACREP accredited school counseling program. Therefore, the results of this study suggest that school counselors-in training can benefit from CACREP strengthening their standards for school counselor accreditation by ensuring all students complete a college and career readiness course or workshop.

Limitations

The research team identified several limitations of this qualitative study which examined school counseling professionals' experiences addressing college and career readiness and the ASCA National Model in CACREP accredited school counseling program. These limitations include research bias, research design, and research process.

Researcher Bias

The research team discussed biases and potential ways to manage them during the first research team meeting. Despite assembling a diverse research team of counselors who do not have a background in school counseling, the primary researcher recognizes his inherent biases as a school counselor educator and school counselor and discovered throughout the study that he strongly supports the ASCA National Model and believes that it should be addressed more in

school counseling graduate programs. To combat researcher bias, the research team engaged in bracketing, utilized an external auditor, and remained intentionally aware of biases to maximize the trustworthiness of the results.

Research Design

A limitation of the research design that was used in this study was the use of semi structured interviews and the implications of two small focus groups. Participants may have felt obligated to provide positive feedback about the ASCA National Model considering there was such a large focus on the association's updates student standards. Furthermore, although the primary researcher planned to conduct a focus group which was comprised of six school counselors who recently graduated from a CACREP accredited program, multiple potential participants did not attend the focus group resulting with the researcher deciding to conduct two very small focus groups (the first one being comprised of four members, the second one being comprised of two). Additionally, because multiple participants of this study shared their lack of training and understanding specific to the ASCA National Model and the MBSS resource, sending them the resource to review before data collection may have given them more time to prepare feedback that they wished to share regarding the resource. Another method could have been to gather prior knowledge before engaging in data collection to ensure participants have had experience with using resources such as the ASCA National Model to address college and career readiness in school counseling programs.

Research Process

The research team identified several research process limitations in this study. First, although participants of this study agreed with previous literature that the role of the elementary school counselor in addressing college and career readiness is often overlooked, this study only

focused on high school counselors' experiences related to the topic. Another concern is that although each participant was given two weeks to review completed transcriptions only seven out of 17 participants engaged in member-checking. Despite the challenges that were presented during this study, multiple participants shared their appreciation in being able to share their experience relating to the topic and most of them expressed their interest in reviewing the final results of the study.

Future Research

The goal of ensuring all K-12 students are prepared for post-secondary success has become such a high priority in the United States that many school counseling professionals and organizations are continuing to develop different strategies of how it can be addressed. Because students and society are continuously evolving, updated research models and personal experience will always be necessary in the field. Potential future research studies that can contribute to the understanding and improvements of school counseling college and career readiness include: taking a longitudinal approach to examine the research questions, allowing elementary school counseling professionals to share their experiences, providing graduating high school students with an opportunity to share their experiences related to the topic, ensuring participants are familiar with ASCA's resources *before* engaging in data collection, and assembling a diverse sample of participants that is comprised of school counseling professionals from various multicultural backgrounds.

To expand on this study, future research that utilizes a longitudinal approach by collecting data throughout school counselor educators' journeys of learning about and implementing college and career readiness resources such as ASCA's MBSS may offer additional insight to the field. By collecting a more detailed educational history of how school

counselor educators are introduced and trained to teach future school counselors may also provide the field with additional recommendations of best practices of addressing the topic in school counseling programs. Additionally, collecting qualitative and quantitative data which measures how school counseling professionals are addressing the topic of college and career readiness and the ASCA National Model can potentially provide the field with additional recommendations of possible improvements in training methods.

A consistent theme that was shared between participants of this study as well as in previous research (Pulliam & Bartek 2018) relates to the belief that college and career readiness counseling should begin at the elementary level. Although previous research suggests recent graduates do not feel adequately prepared to be successful after high-school as well as the claim that high-school counselors also report not feeling prepared to engage in effective college and career readiness counseling, research which provides elementary school counselors with a chance to share their personal experiences is necessary.

Similarly, another study that can potentially provide school counseling professionals with a better understanding of best practices in promoting college and career readiness strategies such as ASCA's MBSS is to allow recent high school graduates to share personal experiences related their perception of how well their high school counseling program was able to prepare them to be successful after high school. Research questions of this study could also focus on specific organizations and resources that their school counselor used. Because previous research is consistent that students are graduating high school and not feeling adequately prepared to be successful in college or the workforce, it is imperative that these recent graduates are provided with a voice to share how their perceptions of how school counseling professionals could improve their college and career readiness programs.

Still another potential research topic that could potentially provide school counseling professionals with a better understanding of the effectiveness of implementing the ASCA National Model to address the topic of college and career readiness in school counseling programs would require all participants to become familiar with ASCA's MBSS before engaging in data collection. Despite the primary researcher identifying ASCA's MBSS resource as a primary focus of this study in the 'description of the study' section of the informed consent that was emailed and signed by all potential participants, multiple participants admitted to being completely unfamiliar with the resource. Therefore, future research which aims to examine perceptions of how effective ASCA's MBSS resource is, it is recommended that researchers ensure potential participants are familiar with the resource before engaging in data collection.

Finally, future research which focuses on school counselor educators' experiences addressing the college and career readiness and perceptions of related resources such as the ASCA National Model should include a more diverse sample that was included in this study. Out of the 12 school counselor educators who participated in this study, two identified as male, three identified as Black/African American, and only one identified as Asian/Indian – all other participants identified as being a white female. Furthermore, all five of the school counseling professionals who participated in the focus groups identified as female, one identified as Asian, one identified as Hispanic/White, and the rest identified as White. By ensuring a diverse participant sample in future research, school counseling professionals of various backgrounds can potentially be provided with personal experiences that they may be better able to relate to.

Conclusion

In summary, this chapter provided an overview of how the results of this study compared to previous literature regarding the school counselor's role in addressing college and career

readiness in school counseling programs. The research team identified five overarching themes (conceptualizing college and career readiness, challenges addressing college and career readiness in school counseling graduate programs, multi-cultural influences, ASCA's MBSS in practice, and challenges with ASCA and the MBSS) and the primary researcher used this section to discuss how participant experiences related to previous research. The findings of the study indicate that although school counseling professionals understand the importance of implementing a successful college and career readiness, there remains a need for more training on how that can be done. Similarly, although the school counseling professionals who participated in this study are aware of ASCA's MBSS resource, they have also indicated a need for more training on how to effectively infuse the resource in school counseling programs. Finally, this section concluded with a reference to the potential limitations of the study as well as specific recommendations of further research that can continue to improve how well school counseling professionals can support K-12 students in becoming prepared for post-secondary success.

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Appendix A: Letter of Invitation

Dear Dr. __,

My name is George Wilson and I am a Doctoral candidate in the Counselor Education and Supervision program at Old Dominion University in Norfolk, VA. I am conducting a dissertation on School Counselor Educators' and High School Counselors' experiences addressing ASCA's mindsets & behaviors for student success to achieve College and Career Readiness. If you are a school counselor educator who has instructed a school counseling orientation, practicum, or internship course at a CACREP accredited college or university within the past five years, I would like to invite you to participate in this study. If you are willing to participate, I would like to interview you in person or online via Zoom for approximately 45-60 minutes. All participants of this study will receive a \$10 Amazon gift card as compensation for their time.

Please let me know if you are willing to participate, as well as possible dates and times you might be available for the interview. If willing to participate, you will be given an informed consent form to sign and further instructions. I appreciate your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

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Appendix B: Informed Consent OLD DOMINION UNIVERSITY

PROJECT TITLE: School Counselor Educators' and High School Counselors' Experiences Addressing ASCA's Mindsets & Behaviors for Student Success to Achieve College and Career Readiness.

INTRODUCTION: The purposes of this form are to give you information that may affect your decision whether to say YES or NO to participation in this research, and to record the consent of those who say YES. This qualitative study's purpose is to gain knowledge about school counselor educators' and high school counselors' experiences helping students achieve college and career readiness.

RESEARCHERS:

Responsible Principal Investigator: Kristy Carlisle, PhD, Department of Counseling and Human Services; Darden College of Education & Professional Studies, Old Dominion University.

Primary Researcher: George Wilson, M.A., Counseling PhD candidate.

DESCRIPTION OF RESEARCH STUDY: College and career readiness has become a national priority for post-secondary student success, and school counselors play an essential role in implementing programs that develop college and career knowledge and skills. However, recent studies have reported that students feel unprepared for life after high school and that school counselors feel unprepared to address college and career readiness concerns in their work. The proposed qualitative study will explore school counselor educators' and high school counselors' experiences addressing college and career readiness strategies and resources during their CACREP accredited school counseling master's programs with a specific focus on the American School Counselor Association's Mindsets & Behaviors for Student Success: K-12 College- and Career Readiness for Every Student. The researcher will interview ten school counselor educators who have taught a counseling orientation, practicum, or internship course at a CACREP college or university within the past five years. Additionally, six high school counselors who have graduated from a CACREP accredited master's program within the past five years will participate in a focus group to discuss their experiences being introduced to college and career readiness strategies and resources. Further understanding school counselor educators' and school counselors' experiences with college and career readiness training can inform graduate education and training programs that maximize school counselor preparation to help students become college and career ready.

INCLUSION CRITERIA: You are a school counselor educator who has instructed a school counseling orientation, practicum, or internship course at a CACREP accredited college or university within the past five years or a high school counselor who has graduated from a CACREP accredited counseling program within the past five years. To the best of your knowledge, you should not have any conflict of interests that would keep you from participating in this study.

RISKS AND BENEFITS:

RISKS: There are no known risks to your participation in this study. The researchers tried to reduce this risk by allowing you to choose not to answer any question that you do not feel comfortable answering. As with any research, there is some possibility that you may be subject to risks that have not yet been identified.

BENEFITS: There are no known direct benefits to your participation in this study.

COSTS AND PAYMENTS: Participants will be compensated with a \$10 amazon gift card electronically for participating in this study.

NEW INFORMATION: If the researchers find new information during this study that might reasonably change your decision about participating, then they will give it to you.

CONFIDENTIALITY: Although the researchers cannot guarantee confidentiality, the information/data you provide for this research will be stored in a password protected file. Participant numbers will be used throughout the data analysis and coding process and in the final reports. Results of the research may be used in reports, presentations, and publications but the researchers will not identify you. In addition, your records may be subpoenaed by court order or inspected by government bodies with oversight authority. According to federal regulations, cases of suspected child abuse/neglect will be reported by the researchers to the local Department of Human Services.

You have the right to review the results of this research if you wish to do so. A copy of the results may be obtained by contacting the researchers.

WITHDRAWAL PRIVILEGE: It is OK for you to say NO. Even if you say YES now, you are free to say NO later, and walk away or withdraw from the study at any time. The researchers reserve the right to withdraw your participation in this study at any time, if they observe potential problems with your continued participation.

COMPENSATION FOR ILLNESS AND INJURY: If you say YES, then your consent in this document does not waive any of your legal rights. However, in the event of any harm arising from this study, neither Old Dominion University nor the researchers are able to give you any money, insurance coverage, free medical care, or any other compensation for such injury. In the event that you require any consultation about the nature of your participation in this project, you may contact:

Dr. Kristy Carlisle, the Responsible Principle Investigator at kcarlisl@odu.edu, Dr. Laura Chezan, current Chair of the Darden College of Education & Professional Studies Human Subjects Review Committee at lchezan@odu.edu, or the Old Dominion University Office of Research at 757-683-3460 who will be glad to review the matter with you.

VOLUNTARY CONSENT: By signing this form you are saying several things. You are saying that you have read this form or have had it read to you, that you are satisfied that you understand this form, the research study, and its risks and benefits. The researchers should have answered any questions you may have had about the research. If you have any questions later on, then the researchers should be able to answer them:

George Wilson, gwils001@odu.edu

And importantly, by signing below, you are telling the researcher YES, that you agree to participate in this study. The researcher should give you a copy of this form for your records.

<div>_____</div> <div>—</div> <div>Subject's Printed Name & Signature</div>	<div>_____</div> <div>_ Date</div>
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Appendix C: Demographic Sheet
School Counselor Educators

Please complete the following demographic information:

1. Are you currently instructing or have you instructed a school counseling orientation, practicum, or internship course at a CACREP accredited university within the past five years? _____
2. Name of the College/University: _____
3. Which state is the CACREP accredited program you have taught a counseling orientation, practicum, or internship course located in? (List most recent)
_____.
4. Total years as a counselor educator at a CACREP accredited university: _____
5. Are you a member of ASCA? _____
For How long? _____ years
6. Age: _____
7. Gender: _____
8. Race/Ethnicity: _____
9. Highest level of education completed: _____

Appendix D: Demographic Sheet
School Counselors

Please complete the following demographic information:

1. Have you graduated from a CACREP accredited school counseling master's program within the past five years? _____
2. Name of the College/University: _____
3. Which state is the CACREP accredited program located? _____.
4. Total years as a school counselor: _____
5. Are you a member of ASCA? _____
 For How long? _____ years
6. Age: _____
7. Gender: _____
8. Race/Ethnicity: _____
9. Highest level of education completed: _____
4. I would describe my school as (check one):
 _____ Urban/City _____ Suburban/Outskirts of the city _____ Rural _____ Other

Appendix E: Interview Protocol School Counselor Educator Interview

Date and Time of the interview:

Zoom Link:

Interviewer: George Wilson

Interviewee:

Position of the interviewee: School Counselor Educator at _____.

Hello, thank you for agreeing to participate in this research study. I am interested in learning about school counselor educators' experiences incorporating ASCA's Mindsets & Behaviors for Student Success: K-12 College and Career Readiness Standards for Every Student in their school counseling orientation, practicum and internship courses.

If you are willing to participate in this interview, I would like to ask you approximately 10 questions regarding your experience with college and career readiness as a school counselor.

5. How would you define 'college and career ready' in the School Counseling profession?"
6. What has been your experience addressing the school counselor's role in helping students become college and career ready?
7. What, if any, multicultural concerns do you have when you think about helping students become 'college and career ready'?
8. How has your school counselor program addressed preparing future school counselors in addressing college and career readiness concerns?
9. Describe your understanding of ASCA's Mindsets & Behaviors for Student Success: K-12 College and Career Readiness Standards for Every Student resource?
10. Do you have any thoughts or opinions on ASCA's mindsets and behavior standards and resources?
11. How were you prepared to use the mindsets and behaviors? How were you prepared to train others to use them in graduate school and in the field?
12. What motivates you to train students using the Mindsets & Behaviors for Student Success: K-12 College and Career Readiness Standards for Every Student resource?
13. What are some of the challenges you have encountered while training students on ASCA's Mindsets & Behaviors for Student Success?
14. Share some examples of other strategies, actions, tools, or resources have you used to help your students be able to address college and career readiness concerns with their students?
15. Is there anything else about this topic that would like to add that I did not ask you about?

Appendix F: **Focus Group Protocol** **School Counselor Focus Group**

Date and Time of the Focus Group:

Zoom Link:

Interviewer: George Wilson

Attending Focus Group Members:

Hello, thank you for agreeing to participate in this research study. I am interested in learning about how high school counselors experienced learning how to incorporate ASCA's Mindsets & Behaviors for Student Success: K-12 College and Career Readiness Standards in their CACREP accredited school counseling program and how they are currently addressing college and career readiness concerns with students.

If you are willing to participate in this interview, I would like to ask the group about 10 questions regarding your experiences addressing student college and career readiness concerns as a school counselor.

1. What comes to mind when you think of 'college and career ready' in the School Counseling profession?
2. What has been your experience/role in helping students become college and career ready?
3. What, if any, multicultural concerns do you have when you think about helping students become college and career ready?
4. How has your master's level CACREP accredited school counseling program addressed preparing future school counselors in addressing college and career readiness concerns?
5. Please describe what your school counseling program did that was helpful in addressing college and readiness.
6. How you would improve the way college and career readiness was addressed in your school counseling graduate program.
7. Describe your understanding of ASCA's Mindsets & Behaviors for Student Success: K-12 College and Career Readiness Standards for Every Student resource?
8. Do you have any thoughts or opinions on ASCA's mindsets and behavior standards and resources?
9. Please share some examples of other strategies, actions, tools, or resources that have you used to help your students be able to address college and career readiness concerns?
10. What barriers have you faced in promoting college and career readiness with your students?
11. Is there anything else about this topic that would like to add that I did not specifically ask about?

Appendix G: Member Checking Email

Greetings Dr. _____,

Hope things are going well with you! I wanted to thank you again for participating in my study regarding college and career readiness and ASCA's Mindsets and Behaviors for Student Success. Because your insights and expert opinions are central to the credibility of my dissertation study, I would like to offer you the opportunity to add any additional thoughts or opinions that you've had since the completion of our recent interview.

Attached you will find the interview verbatim transcript as well as the interview protocol for our interview/focus group. Please respond to this email with any corrections/clarifications of the recorded information. If you would prefer to schedule an appointment via zoom or telephone to discuss any corrections or additions that you would like your interview to reflect, I would be happy to accommodate your schedule. If I do not hear from you within two weeks, I will assume you are comfortable with the information that you provided to me during the interview and proceed with data analysis.

Thanks again for all of your help,

George

George Wilson, M.S. (Primary Researcher)
 Doctoral Candidate
 Department of Counseling and Human Services Old Dominion University
gwils001@odu.edu
 (267) 357-3613

Kristy Carlisle, Ph.D., (Research Supervisor)
 Assistant Professor – Dissertation Committee Chair
 Department of Counseling and Human Services Old Dominion University
 (757) 683-6123
kcarlisl@odu.edu

Please note that Old Dominion University Education Human Subjects Review Committee has taken the following action on IRBNet:

Project Title: [1483856-1] School Counselor Educators' and High School Counselors' Experiences Addressing ASCA's Mindsets & Behaviors for Student Success to Achieve College and Career Readiness

Demographic Tables

Table 1.1

School Counselor Educator Backgrounds

Pseudonym	State	Years as a SCE	ASCA Member	Age	Gender	Race	Education
SCE 1	IN	15	Y	62	F	Caucasian	Ed.D
SCE 2	MS	4	Y	40	F	Caucasian	PhD.
SCE 3	WI	22	N	57	F	Caucasian	Ed.D
SCE 4	FL	7	N	38	F	Asian/Indian	PhD.
SCE 5	LA	2.5	N	39	F	Black/African American	PhD.
SCE 6	MI	1.5	Y	N/A	F	Black/African American	PhD.
SCE 7	VA	1	Y	54	M	Caucasian	PhD.
SCE 8	AL	4.5	Y	42	F	Asian/Indian	PhD.
SCE 9	VA	15	Y	60	M	Caucasian	PhD.
SCE 10	LA	12	N	47	F	Caucasian	PhD.
SCE 11	OH	1	Y	39	F	Caucasian	PhD.
SCE 12	NC	5.5	Y	62	F	Black/African American	PhD

Table 1.2

School Counselor Backgrounds

Pseudonym	State	Years as a SC	ASCA Member	Age	Gender	Race	Area
SC 1	KS	2	Y	33	F	White	Urban/City
SC 2	PA	2	Y	42	F	Caucasian	Rural
SC 3	MI	3	Y	25	F	Asian	Urban/City
SC 4	NM	7	Y	53	F	Hispanic/White	Urban
SC 5	NM	20	Y	35	F	White	Rural

Note. All school counseling participants have earned Master's Degrees for CACREP programs.

VITA

George Wilson
6732 Gillespie Street
Philadelphia, PA 19135
(267) 357-3613
Gwils001@odu.edu

EDUCATION

Doctorate in Counselor Education and Supervision (CACREP) Old Dominion University, Norfolk, VA	August 2020
Master of Science, Counseling Services Concentration: School Counseling Villanova University, Villanova, PA	May 2013
Bachelor of Arts, Psychology Chestnut Hill College, Philadelphia, PA	May 2009
Bachelor of Science, Elementary Education Chestnut Hill College, Philadelphia, PA	May 2009

CERTIFICATION/LICENSURE

- Pennsylvania School Counselor License
- Pennsylvania School Counselor Certification
- Pennsylvania Elementary K-6 Teaching Certification

UNIVERSITY TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Adjunct Professor <i>Department of Counseling</i> Rosemont College, Rosemont, PA • <i>CNS 6500 Clinical Mental Health Counseling Practicum</i> • <i>CNS 6065 School Counseling PK-12</i> • <i>CNS 6010 Counseling Skills and Techniques</i> • <i>CNS 6070 Career and Lifestyle Counseling</i> • <i>CNS 5999 Counseling Theory and Practice</i>	SP 2019 - Present
Doctoral Graduate Teaching Assistant <i>Department of Counseling and Human Services</i> Old Dominion University, Norfolk, VA • <i>HMVS 341 Intro to Human Services</i> • <i>HMVS 339 Interpersonal Skills</i>	FA 2016 – FA 2018

Master's Level Courses Co-Taught

20018 - 2019

*Department of Counseling and Human Services**Old Dominion University, Norfolk, VA*

- *COUN 666 Internship in School Counseling*
- *COUN 678 Counseling Children and Adolescents in School Settings*

PUBLIC SCHOOL COUNSELING EXPERIENCE**Hamilton Disston Elementary School**

FA 2019 -

Present

School District of Philadelphia, Philadelphia, PA

K-8. 870:1 Student/Counselor Ratio

PUBLIC SCHOOL TEACHING EXPERIENCE**Elementary School Teacher**

FA 2011 - SP 2016

*School District of Philadelphia, Philadelphia, PA**Francis Hopkinson Elementary School*

Grades K-8, Special Education, Inclusion Classes

Elementary School Teacher

FA 2009 - SP 2010

*School District of Philadelphia, Philadelphia, PA**John H. Webster Elementary School*

Grades K-5, Special Education, Emotional Support

PRACTICUM/INTERNSHIP EXPERIENCE**High School Counselor**

2018 - 2019

*Virginia Beach City Public Schools, Virginia Beach, PA**Ocean Lakes High School*

School Counseling Internship: 15 weeks

School Counseling Practicum: 15 weeks

School Counselor Intern

SP 2013

*School District of Philadelphia, Philadelphia PA**Francis Hopkinson Elementary School*

School Counseling Internship: 15 weeks

5TH Grade Teacher

2008-2009

School District of Philadelphia, Philadelphia, PA
Hamilton Disston Elementary School
 Student Teacher: 15 weeks of observation/teaching

4th Grade Teacher

Spring 2008

School District of Philadelphia, Philadelphia, PA
John Story Jenks Elementary School
 Practicum Student: 72 hours of observation/teaching

2nd Grade Teacher

Fall 2007

Holy Child Catholic School, Philadelphia, PA
 Practicum Student: 72 hours of observation/teaching

PUBLICATIONS**Refereed**

1. Havlik, S., Neason, E., Puckett, J., Rowley, P., & **Wilson, G.** (2017). "Do whatever you can to try to support that kid": School counselors' experiences addressing student homelessness. *Professional School Counselor*, 21(1), 47- 59.
<https://doi.org/10.5330/1096-2409-21.1.47>

In Progress

2. **Wilson, G. Dissertation:** Lived experiences of school counselor educators and high school counselors using ASCA's Mindsets & Behavior Standards to address College and Career Readiness. Defense date: April 3, 2020.
3. Burgess, M., Boulden, R., Smith-Durkin, S., & **Wilson, G.** An empirical state of mind: Evidence-based practices in the supervision of future school counselors.

PRESENTATIONS**National/Regional Refereed**

1. Burgess, M., Boulden, R., Smith-Durkin, S., & **Wilson, G.** (2018, March). *An empirical state of mind: Evidence-based practices in the supervision of future school counselors.*
 Education session proposal submitted for the Evidence-Based School Counseling conference, New York, NY.

2. **Wilson, G.** (2018, February). *The Role of the School Counselor in Underperforming VS. Typically Achieving Schools*. Poster Presentation (VACES) annual conference, Lynchburg, VA.
3. Burgess, M. & **Wilson, G.** (2017, October). *Transitioning From Graduate Student to School Counselor: Strategies for School Counselor Educators*. Poster Presentation (ACES) annual conference, Chicago, IL.
4. **Wilson, G.** (2017, February). *Teaching School Counselors to Incorporate Youth Interest and Culture to Build Rapport*. Poster Presentation (VACES) annual conference, Norfolk, VA.
5. Havlik, S., Neason, E., Puckett, J., Rowley, P., & **Wilson, G.** (2013, April). *Partnerships to Promote College and Career Readiness for Homeless Students*. 60-Minute Education Session (NOSCA) annual conference, New Orleans, LA.

Workshops and Guest Lectures

Wilson, G. (2017). *Using music when working with children*. HMSV: 448 Interventions and Advocacy with Children. Old Dominion University, Norfolk, VA.

University Work Experience

Human Service Advisor

2017 - 2019

Career Academic Resource Center (CARC)
Old Dominion University, Norfolk, VA

Assistant to the Director of Admissions

2017

Department of Counseling and Human Services
Old Dominion University, Norfolk, VA

Research Assistant

2016 – 2017

Department of Counseling and Human Services
Old Dominion University, Norfolk, VA
Dr. Emily Goodman-Scott – School Counseling Program Coordinator

COUNSELING EXPERIENCE

Summary of Skills

- Individual Counseling
- Group Therapy
- Supervision

Group Therapy

- Led T-Groups of undergraduate students
FA 2017
- Led Process Groups of PhD students
FA 2018
- Social/Emotional Groups with middle school students

Supervision

2017 – Present

- Instructed Mental Health Practicum and School Counseling Internship courses.
- Provided Psycho-educational training for master's level students.
- Face-to face as well as online supervision.
- Individual as well as triadic supervision.

SERVICE**Chi Sigma Iota National Honor Society**

2012 – Present

*Chapter Treasurer, Old Dominion University**Chapter President, Villanova University***Read for Ronald**

2012 - Present

School Coordinator, School District of Philadelphia

- Helped students raise thousands of dollars for the Ronald McDonald House Charities by helping students obtain sponsorships for reading.

School Spirit Committee

2012 - 2016

School Mascot

Francis Hopkinson & John H. Webster Elementary School

Philadelphia Federation of Teachers Building Committee

2015

Teacher's Union

Francis Hopkinson Elementary School

ASAP Debate Team

2014 - 2016

Coach, School District of Philadelphia

Francis Hopkinson Elementary School

University/Department**Panel Presenter**

SP 2017

*Old Dominion University, Norfolk, VA**Diversity Workshop: HMSV 346: Diversity Issues in Human Services***Ethics Competition**

FA 2017

Old Dominion University, Norfolk, VA
 ACA Graduate Student Ethics - Doctoral Level

SCHOLARSHIPS AND AWARDS

- **Donald J. Musacchio Scholarship.** (Summer, 2018). Old Dominion University (\$1,000).
- **Old Dominion University Credit Union Scholarship.** (Summer, 2018). Old Dominion University (\$2,500).
- **Darden College of Education Dean's Office Travel Fund.** (Spring, 2017). Old Dominion University (\$350).
- **PAW Service Award.** (2016). Francis Hopkinson Elementary School.
- **Villanova Leadership Award.** (2013). Counseling Program, Villanova University (\$2,130).
- **Leadership Award** (2009). Chestnut Hill College (\$5,500).
- **W.W Smith Scholarship** (2007-2009). Chestnut Hill College (\$7,500).

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

- American School Counselor Association (ASCA)
- American Counseling Association (ACA)
- Association for Counselor Education and Supervision (ACES)
- Chi Sigma Iota, Counseling Honor Society (CSI)

COMPUTER SKILLS

- **Black Board** - resource and student access software
- **Canvas** – resource and student access software
- **SPSS** - statistical analysis program
- **Dropbox** - file storing and sharing software
- **Google Drive** - file storing and sharing software
- **Degreeworks** – resource for planning a course of study
- **Leo Online** - student and faculty information system
- **Microsoft Office Professional** - Excel, OneNote, Outlook, PP, Publisher, Word
- **Survey Monkey** - web based survey creation application

REFERENCES

Dr. Lynn Ortale, Vice President of Student Life

- Address: Chestnut Hill College. 9601 Germantown Ave. Phila., PA, 19118
- Phone: 215-248-7030
- Email: ortalel@chc.edu

Dr. Kristy Carlisle, Associate Professor of Counseling & Human Services
(Dissertation Chair)

- Address: 1 Old Dominion University. Norfolk, VA, 23529
- Phone: 757-683-6132
- Email: kcarlisl@odu.edu

Dr. Emily Goodman-Scott, Assistant Professor. Graduate Program Director. School
Counseling Director.

- Address: 1 Old Dominion University. Norfolk, VA, 23529
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